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~ BUFFALO BILL'S DEATH-DEAL; ~

OR,

The Wandering Jew of the West.

BY

Colonel Prentiss Ingraham.



BUFFALO BILL RODE INTO THEIR MIDST, HIS REVOLVERS RINGING OUT DEATH-KNELLS AT EVERY SHOT.

Buffalo Bill's Death-Deal

OR, THE

Wandering Jew of the Wild West.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

A DYING MAN'S CONFESSION.

"Are you Buffalo Bill?"

"I am so called."

"I am dying."

"Well, it is a medicine that, sooner or later, we all have to take."

"Are you not interested in my passing from life into the dark silence of the grave?"

"Yes; as one man is interested in the suffering and sorrows of a fellow-being whom I do not know."

"But you do know me, Buffalo Bill."

"Never to my knowledge did I see you before."

"Yet, twice before have we met."

"I have a good memory for faces, but fail to recall yours."

"Do you recall charging into an Indian camp five years ago and saving a man from being tortured to death by his red captors?"

"It was at night, in the Platte Valley, and the man was a sergeant of cavalry who had been captured?"

"Yes; you saw that a white man was doomed to death, and you took the chances, though alone, of saving him."

"I remember; but I never saw him after, for when I cut his bonds he sprung upon an Indian gray, as I bade him to do, and, in the darkness, we became separated, but I learned afterward that he was bearing important dispatches and got through with them in safety."

"I was that man, Buffalo Bill."

"Indeed? But, you are not a soldier now."

"No. I am a vagabond."

"Better have remained in the army. I hate to see a United States soldier in bad luck."

"I left the army for a purpose."

"Well, comrade, what can I do for you, now, in your extremity?"

"I told you that we had met twice before?"

"Yes. Where was our second meeting?"

"I told you that I had left the army for a purpose?"

"Yes." And Buffalo Bill seemed to feel that the man's mind was wandering.

"That purpose was but half fulfilled."

"I am sorry, if the purpose was an honest one."

"I have a legacy to leave you, Buffalo Bill."

The scout smiled sadly, for again he felt that the mind of the dying man was wandering. What legacy could a self-confessed vagabond of the plains leave to any one?

"Yes. I shall leave you a legacy, Buffalo Bill, and it is a duty for you to do; a command which you must obey from a dying man."

"I will do what I can, comrade, to carry out any proper wish you may have; I would not refuse that to a foe; and you, having been a soldier, have a strong claim upon me."

"I have a yet stronger claim upon you."

"Ah! what is it?"

"I told you that we had met twice before?"

"Yes."

"You see me dying here?"

"Yes, and I am sorry indeed."

"Do you know the cause?"

"You do not appear to have been ill. Were you wounded?"

"Yes; a bullet is killing me, for the doctor told me half an hour ago that there was no hope, that I had but a few hours to live. and that, while my mind remained clear I must make any statement I wished as to who had been my enemy, who had given me my death-wound."

"I am very sorry for you, and if you wish to tell me who shot you, and the circumstances, I will do what I can to find the man."

"I have found him. I know him well,

now, though I did not, when he gave me this wound."

"He is safe, Buffalo Bill."

"Then you killed him?"

"Oh, no, not that, but, he will not escape."

"When the doctor told me I must die, I made him swear to me, by the love he bore his mother, that he was telling me the truth."

"Yes, he told you the truth, poor pard; I can see that much plainly enough."

"Yes, he told me how the bullet had cut its way, and then swore that I must die, that the wound would prove fatal within a few hours."

"When told that, I sent for you, Buffalo Bill."

"And now tell me what I can do for you?"

"Will you do it?"

"If it is in my power to do so, yes."

"I thank you, and I appeal to you to do as you say—appeal by a claim I have on you of which you do not yet know."

"That of humanity is enough."

"For a man like you, yes; but there must be no mistake in this, for you must carry out the duty I leave to you, because it is a sacred legacy—the legacy of a dying man to the one who took his life."

"My God! what do you mean?"

"Just what I say, Buffalo Bill—that you placed me here, your hand sent this bullet into my body and—hold! I do not blame you; not a word of censure do I utter, for it was all through my own act."

"I told you that we had met a second time, and that other time was last night."

"I was almost moneyless, a vagabond, and I wanted to prosecute my search for one I sought to find."

"I saw you coming, and I determined to kill you, to get your horse, your weapons, and your money."

"So I crouched down by the trail and fired on you—there, I see where the bullet cut through your hat. Thank God it was not through your heart."

"Your horse sprung away at my shot, but you fired at me, and the bullet is here in my body."

"I fled from the scene, and came to this camp. The doctor tried hard to save me, but he cannot, and so I sent for you, Buffalo Bill, to leave to you a legacy, a vagabond's legacy."

CHAPTER II.

BUFFALO BILL'S LEGACY.

BUFFALO BILL gazed upon the dying man, as he lay upon a bed of blankets before him, with a look of intense pity in his eyes.

The surroundings were rough and dreary in the extreme, for the scene lay in the mountain country in Colorado, at a time when bold pioneers, the army and the wild following that hovers about advancing civilization, alone had found a foothold there.

Buffalo Bill—W. F. Cody, Chief of Scouts—was there in the discharge of duty, scouting, dispatch-bearing, and with an eye upon evil-doers as a Government officer.

He had arrived in that wild camp late the night before, had been fired at from ambush, had returned the shot, had ridden on to the log cabin tavern, and, early in the morning, had been called from his blanket couch to be told that a man who lay at death's door wished to see him.

He had quickly hastened to him, to find in a miner's cabin the dying man whose confession has just been related, that the scout's own bullet had placed him there.

The two miners who had taken the wounded man into their cabin and sent for the camp doctor, knew him only as a wandering vagabond who had been some weeks in the mines, friendless, apparently moneyless, refusing to work, but roving about as though he was searching for some one, as though he had a purpose in view, and bearing every appearance of having been a gentleman.

Wounded and suffering as he came, in the night, to their cabin door, the two miners had cared for him as best they could.

When told that he must die, when he had made the doctor take oath to his being mortally wounded, he had said:

"Go to the tavern, and you will find there a horseman who came into the camps last night."

"Tell him to come to see a man who has but a few hours to live."

The message was delivered; the scout quickly responded; the doctor and the two miners retired from the cabin and the dying vagabond and Buffalo Bill were left alone.

Such was the scene; such the cause of their third meeting.

"My poor man, I am sorry indeed that my hand has been the one to send you out of life."

"I came here under orders, was fired upon, returned the shot, and as my horse was hard to check, rode on, not knowing that my return shot, fired at random, had done any harm."

"It has done no harm. It has nearly removed from life one who were best in the grave, now that another will make amends for a wrong, will carry out the purpose the dying man has in view, for you have so pledged yourself."

"To the extent of my power to do so, if, as I say, the commission is a just one."

"It is so and you can fulfill the pledge, for you are great, powerful, while I was but a poor unknown wanderer—a vagabond; I have a legacy to leave."

"Here, take from about my waist my belt—there! oh! how I hate to show you that every move causes me pain, for I read in your fine face that you suffer, too."

"Could I do otherwise, if there was any manhood in me, than feel for the sufferings of another, even though I had not dealt the blow that caused it?"

"You are human, though your profession is to slay, as mine was, when a soldier."

"You have the belt, but it contains only a few pieces of gold, put away for a rainy day, when I could not beg my way, or get food, or kill and rob, for I have done both in the prosecution of my purpose."

"I am sorry to hear that, but it is not for me to reproach you now."

"You are kind, Buffalo Bill, as I felt sure you would be, for I am familiar with your record, I know all that you are."

"Did I not I would not trust you now as I do, with the legacy I leave you."

"As to the few pieces of gold in my belt, give them to some poor wretch such as I, or spend them in placing me in the grave."

"There are papers, also, as you see, in the belt, with a miniature set in gold, a ring, and other trinkets."

"Yes, and very valuable I should say, for this miniature is set with precious stones."

"Were I starving, I would not have parted with it—there is a piece of paper pasted over the face, you see, and another over the gold back, hiding the name."

"Yes, I notice that."

"I dared not look at the face or the name again—I may have to look in those eyes some day in the Spirit Land—who knows?"

"But those papers in your hand?"

"Yes, I have them?"

"The one unsealed read when I am gone. That will tell you all, who I am, what I am, what you are to do—that is the legacy I leave to you, Buffalo Bill—hark! some one called my name distinctly—did you not hear it?"

"No, no!" and the scout tenderly clasped the hand of the dying man.

"Put those things safely away," came, after a few minutes.

The scout did so, while the wounded man's eyes watched him closely.

When he had placed the belt around his own waist, he again clasped the hand of the death-stricken vagabond, who said faintly:

"You must keep your pledge to me."

"I will."

"Hark! Again they are calling me!"

A moment after the doctor looked into the cabin door, and Buffalo Bill beckoned to him to enter.

He came in with the two miners, and said:

"He cannot last long. The end is near."

"Did he tell you who killed him?"

"Yes; I know all."

"He is gone."

Buffalo Bill arose, clasped the hands over the breast and said:

"I will pay all expenses, so give him a decent burial, pards."

"Will you be there—say, in a couple of hours?" asked one of the miners.

"Yes; I will be there."

CHAPTER III.

SOME CHARACTERS OF GRIZZLY GULCH.

LEAVING the miner's cabin, wherein lay the body of the dead vagabond, Buffalo Bill returned to Grizzly Gulch, as the mining camp proper was called, and which was situated in the very wilds of the Rocky Mountains.

It was a typical mining settlement of those times, twenty-five years ago, with all that that meant, so no more need be said in explanation of the locality.

Of its half a thousand souls much might be written, but with a few only has this story to deal.

The "Hotel" was a large log cabin, with bar, gambling saloon, office, dining-room and kitchen below, and the open dormitory and a few alleged "sleeping rooms" above.

As only a board floor was between the carousers below and the would-be sleepers above, it can well be understood that the "Crows' Roost" was not a very desirable place for a tired traveler to put up, as far as accommodation went, though the table was supplied with "the best to be had," which was all right for a very hungry man, but not for one with epicurean tastes.

As was usual in frontier camps, the landlord of the Crows' Roost, was a man of position and influence, a kind of *multum in parvo* individual, who owned a store, the coach line, gambling saloon and a stable of horses.

He was magistrate, postmaster, Express-agent and deputy marshal as well, and though something of a "hard citizen" himself when occasion, in his opinion, demanded that he should be, he was accordingly respected, feared and shunned by those who were of larger caliber in wickedness than himself.

If "Captain John," for so he was called, felt that it was the good of Grizzly Gulch to remove a wayward brother from the camp, he would quickly find some charge upon which to arrest him, and he being the constable would take him in hand; as magistrate he would try him, and the verdict being guilty, he would hang him; after which, as coroner, he would "sit on the corpse," and send it to the grave with "by the law's will" tacked upon the coffin—which last he, "Captain John," would furnish for a consideration.

A mild-mannered man was Captain John, clean shaven, always dressed in black, looking a cross between an itinerant parson and a city undertaker, while his belt of arms was always concealed beneath his long-tailed frock coat, which, for convenience, had only the top button fastened, so that he could readily get at his weapons when needed.

He wore his hair long, and well kept, a high hat with *crepe* around it in memory of some one, no person dared ask him who, and his gold spectacles gave him a scholarly look, yet concealed a pair of eyes that were small, beadlike, black as night and as piercing as an eagle's.

Captain John was always generous to one in distress, but those who were not in distress in some way did the paying for all such bursts of generosity on his part.

A man of splendid physique, great strength and cat-like quickness, he always did his own "bouncing," and was not afraid of any person or anything, and the people knew it.

One of the day boarders at the Crows' Roost, but who had his cabin and office some distance off, was the "medicine man" of the camp, as he was more frequently called, but who had out a neat little sign that read:

"EUGENE DOUGLASS,
"Physician and Surgeon."

Doctor Douglass was a man of skill in his profession, was ever ready to lend a helping hand, but his nature was intrepid; he was outspoken in his opinions. He dressed well, in spite of his surroundings, and therefore, would have been very quickly sat upon by the roughs if he had not shown that he could take care of himself when occasion required.

If he carried arms no one saw where they were hidden, and yet he was known to be a dead shot, and when imposed upon now and then, he had forced such trouble seekers to come out squarely and meet him, and a couple of examples which he had made had

won for him the respect, if not the affection of the rough and tough element.

Like Captain John, a poor man he never charged, but one with money had to pay well for his services, and in his attendance upon the two, rich and poor, no one could see any difference.

A handsome man too, was Dr. Douglass—a gentleman, quiet and with no intimate friend in the camp; so he seemed out of place in Grizzly Gulch, and thinking men wondered why such a man "hid his light under a bushel," as it were, in such a wild and undesirable place.

But, Eugene Douglass gave no explanation of why he had come to the frontier to practice medicine and surgery, for "gun-shot wounds" in that community soon became his "specialty."

The two stage-drivers who came in and left Grizzly Gulch once each week upon different trails, were men not to overlook, one being Lou Loring, "a man with a record," and the other Nervy Nat Hutchins.

These two drivers knew their duty and did it, while they were not fellows to trifle with, either upon the trail or when off duty in camp.

It was the day of arrival for the two coaches, the one from the eastward, the other from the west, and when Buffalo Bill, after leaving the dead vagabond, went up to the Crows' Roost, he was greeted by both Nervy Nat and Lou Loring, who knew him well, and were making their report to Captain John.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GENTLEMAN VAGABOND.

"Well, Loring, how goes it on the stage trail?" asked Buffalo Bill of the driver who had last greeted him.

"I was just telling Captain John that I war held up on this run in to Grizzly Gulch."

"No; and robbed?"

"No, not robbed."

"You escaped them, then, with your usual good luck, Lou?"

"I escaped being robbed, Bill, and there was but one man who held me up."

"There were others near."

"No, only one, and his motive was not robbery, at least, he did not want gold, did not ask for it, even."

"A strange road-agent, certainly."

"The strangest I ever saw, Bill. I was just telling Captain John about it when you came up, and I'll tell you, too, for it is the same experience that Nervy Nat here had on his run out, and by the same man, though he held Nat up fifty miles from where I was halted."

"I wish you would tell me, Lou, and I would like to hear Nat's story as well."

"Well, Bill, it was at the crossing of Black Water Creek, ten miles from here, and my horses were drinking, when I saw a man quietly rise up from behind a rock, just where Jake Doyle's grave is, you know, and he called out in the politest way possible, and with a strong accent:

"Don't move, mine frint, for I vas haf you covered pretty quick."

"Well, he did have me covered pretty quick. I had the reins in my hands and didn't move, but just looked at him and continued:

"Well, Dutchy, what do you want?"

"I wants a man who vas known as te Vagabond Gentlemans—vas he mit you, mine frint?"

"I told him that I was alone, that I did not know the Vagabond Gentleman, or the particular one to whom he referred, though there were a number of that kind out in this country, and asked him what more he wanted, and ever so polite, he answered;

"I don't vant noddings else; you can drive on, mine frint."

"Well, I drove on, while he stood watching me, his rifle covering me until I was out of sight."

"Well, he is a queer one."

"But, describe him, Lou."

"He is a tall man, broad-shouldered, with long, iron-gray hair, and beard falling to his belt. If he is not a Jew he looks it."

"How was he dressed?"

"In buckskin, from moccasins to cap."

"And armed?"

"With a repeating rifle and belt of arms." "Mounted?"

"I did not see any horse."

"Now, Nervy Nat, you, too, were held up?"

"Yas, Bill, I was, and by that same Jew in buckskin."

"When was this?"

"On my run out two days ago."

"Where?"

"At the Pink Cliffs, forty miles from here, and, strange to say, right on Jesse Wild's grave, fer the feller were standin' on it when I seen him, with his rifle a-coverin' me."

"What did he say to you?"

"Now, Bill, I don't talk good English, as I well knows, an' I can't tarn what I does say inter that Jew lingo, like Lou kin, but he said about ther same ter me."

"Did not rob you?"

"Not a dollar did he ask fer."

"But wanted to find the Gentleman Vagabond?"

"Yas, that's ther man he wanted, whoever he be."

Buffalo Bill was silent for a moment and then said:

"Captain John, it is a coincidence, but I came here to Grizzly Gulch to ask you to watch for just the man Lou and Nat describe; a person dressed in buckskin, with long iron-gray hair and beard, tall form, and who has halted the coaches, ingoing and outgoing, on several of the trails to the forts and camps.

"He has never robbed one of them, is always alone, but his strange actions have caused General Burr to send me out to get some clue as to who and what he is, and that is why I came here—to know if you had heard of him."

"Not until the boys just told me of him, Cody, for he is a new one on me, though perhaps I can spot the Vagabond Gentleman he is in search of," answered Captain John.

"Who is this Vagabond Gentleman, then?"

"A man who has been in and out of the gulch the past month or two, and who would not work, saying that he had not been brought up to toil, but was a gentleman though a tramp."

"The boys took a fancy to him, for he sung well, played the guitar, recited for their amusement and could entertain them well when in the humor to do so, and they helped him, he living about the camps anywhere and everywhere."

"What was the man's name?"

"I never knew more than that he was called Tramp, and spoken of as the Millionaire Beggar and Gentleman Vagabond."

"I think the man you refer to was shot last night, and now lies dead in the cabin of the two miners known as the Brewer Boys, for I just came from there, as I was sent for by the poor fellow when the doctor told him he must die."

"He is to be buried soon, and I will go to breakfast now and then attend the funeral."

"Why, I heard nothing of this murder, and—"

"Hold on just there, Captain John, for the man was not murdered as I happen to know."

"Yet, as the magistrate, coroner and keeper of the place of Grizzly Gulch, I must sit on the case and learn all about it, you know."

"All right. As the lips of the dead man are sealed you will have to come to me for what information you may wish to get in your triple capacity. Now I am going to breakfast."

And Buffalo Bill passed on into the breakfast-room, the two drivers accompanying him, while Captain John hastened over to the cabin of the Brewer Boys, for if there was any fee to be made out of the death of the Gentleman Vagabond he was the one to make it.

CHAPTER V.

A SERIOUS CHARGE.

CAPTAIN JOHN ran Grizzly Gulch, as he said, as a peaceful town should be run—that is, with fines for misdeeds of minor nature, death for crimes of any magnitude, and this meant coroner's fees, burials and other sources of income, all of which were divided by the few men who were "in the ring."

He had had his breakfast, and when the others went in to get theirs, he hastened away to the cabin of the Brewer Boys.

He found that the body of the Gentleman Vagabond had been decently laid out, in a new suit of clothes, boots, for to bury a man there without boots would not be proper, and a hat.

As Buffalo Bill had said that he would pay all expenses, these things had been purchased as "necessities."

A coffin had been ordered also, and, as Captain John owned the store where the clothes had been bought, and the carpenter shop that supplied what was facetiously called the "wooden overcoat," he saw profit to himself in what had already been done.

But, the coroner's fee must be added, and he at once began to question the Brewers as to the death of the man, and having learned that he had come to the cabin in a dying condition, that they had sent for the doctor, who, in turn, had sent for Buffalo Bill, Captain John at once decided that it was a case for a "jury" to sit on, and went off to look up half a dozen men.

A crowd soon gathered at the Brewer cabin; six men were polled as jurors, and the Brewer Boys repeated before them what they had told Captain John, who, having done that which would give him his fee, was content with the verdict to the effect:

"That the corpse, name unknown, had died by a bullet wound inflicted by hand unknown."

Just as this had been rendered a man stepped into the cabin and cried:

"I charge the Government scout, Buffalo Bill, with murdering that man!"

All started at this.

Even Captain John was amazed, while several voices said:

"It's a lie!"

The man who made this serious charge was a miner and was known to be working a rich claim.

That he called himself Dave Donovan, and was considered to be a dangerous man to trifle with, was all that was known of him.

"At the proper time, if any man wants to say I lie, he can do so, and be answered," was replied.

Then, in response to Captain John's demand that he should tell what he knew about the killing of the man before them, he said:

"It was last night, when I had started to my lower claim, that I seen a man on horseback talking in the trail to one on foot, and I lay low, not wishing 'em to see me."

"The mounted man were Buffalo Bill, the man on foot were thet corpse thar, and the latter were threatenin' somethin' that he'd tell on the scout, when, all of a sudden, I seen a flash, a revolver was fired, and away dashed thet horseman on toward camp, leavin' the other fellow lyin' in the trail."

"As I didn't want to be know'd in it, I went on to my claim, and jist got back when I heard Buffalo Bill tell you his story, Cap'n John, so I accuse him of the murder of thet vagabond gent."

All were astonished at this, and Captain John at once said he would arrest Buffalo Bill and bring him there to answer.

"And then hang him, for he shouldn't escape if he be a scout," insisted Dave Donovan savagely, and others echoed his words.

In ten minutes Captain John was back with his prisoner, whom he had found in the drivers' cabin talking with them.

"I'll go with you, Captain John, but put those irons up, for if you attempt to place them on me I'll kill you," said the scout, quietly.

And he was not ironed, but went with Captain John, Nervy Nat and Lou Loring following in utter amazement, the former saying:

"It's a lie ag'in' him, fer somebody as is afraid of him wants to down him, Lou, and we must see him through."

"You bet we will, Nat," was the reply.

When brought before the corpse, the jury, the combined magistrate and coroner, Captain John, and Dave Donovan his accuser, every eye was on Buffalo Bill.

His face did not change color, and when Dave Donovan had repeated his story, and

Cody was asked what he had to say, he replied calmly:

"In the first place that man lies, for some purpose of his own, for I did not meet the man lying dead there in the trail, or have a word with him."

"I was fired upon from ambush, I returned the shot at random, in the dark; rode on, and did not know that my bullet had even wounded my foe, until one of those miners came to the Crows' Roost for me this morning early, and when I returned I found a dying man."

"He wished to make a confession to me; said he had recognized me by the flash of the revolvers, and stated that my bullet had given him his death wound. Not knowing before he shot, who I was, he had sought to rob me, take my horse and go his way."

"Here is where his bullet cut through my hat, and when I had heard his story and saw who he was, I having known him when he was a soldier, I remained by him until he died and told these men that I would pay all expenses of his burial."

"Yes, cap'n, thar was two shots fired, for I heerd them," called out a miner, while others were in favor of believing the story told by Dave Donovan against the scout, especially as the latter had confessed to having met the Gentleman Vagabond before.

"I says he's guilty, as the testimony shows, and if the jury don't so find him, they'll hev ter answer ter us," cried Dave Donovan.

That his words were approved was shown by the cheers that greeted them on all sides.

CHAPTER VI.

HELD UP ON THE TRAIL.

It began to certainly look dark for Buffalo Bill at this stage of the proceedings, for Captain John had said nothing yet to favor him, while the jury would decide to meet the popular will, for fear of their own safety.

Captain John was so influenced, also, as he wished to keep up his popularity, yet he knew that he must go slow where a Government officer was concerned, and was one of Buffalo Bill's reputation, especially.

As for the crowd, they were dead set against any officer of the law, and would as soon, if not sooner, hang Buffalo Bill as any man in the camps, and that was the way the tide was setting with that wild, desperate lot of men.

But, just then, a stern voice spoke out:

"Let me pass here, for this is infamous, to accuse that splendid fellow!"

The crowd gave way, and Doctor Eugene Douglass stepped before the jury and Captain John, and spoke in tones to have their meaning unmistakable:

"If justice was wanted here, why was this trial being held while I, the one who attended that man, was not sent for as a witness?"

"I didn't know you could tell anything about the shooting, Doc," assured Captain John, uneasily.

"I can tell everything, for the dying man told me that he sought to kill and not rob Scout Cody and asked me to send after him, and I did so."

"He said that he had a confession to make, to him, if I was sure he would die, and the Brewer Boys and I know that he did make such a confession, and this trumped up charge against Buffalo Bill is done by those who fear him as a Government officer and wish to see him hanged, guilty or not guilty."

"You, Captain John, should not have tolerated this outrage for a minute."

"Upon the testimony of Doctor Douglass the prisoner is released," cried Captain John quickly, for he was evidently alarmed at the bold stand taken by the fearless medicine-man.

The fickle crowd at once cheered the "verdict," and many called upon Dave Donovan, but he had already disappeared.

The coffin having arrived, it was decided to have the funeral then.

The body was placed in the unpainted pine box, pall-bearers were easily found, and the procession was at once formed to go to the grave, half a mile distant, Buffalo Bill, Captain John, Doctor Douglass and the two stage drivers heading the procession as "mourners."

The doctor repeated the burial service over the body, the grave was filled in, and, as they

turned from the scene, Buffalo Bill went up to Eugene Douglass and said:

"Doctor, let me thank you for your kindness in my behalf, for it saved bloodshed, perhaps my life; but I did not know that the man had told you his story."

"He had not, but I knew enough to feel that if you had shot him you had but done your duty."

"Then he said nothing to you as to who had shot him, and why?"

"Not a word."

"And you—"

"Simply lied, that was all, and I consider that I did my duty, for I saw that there was an element in the crowd against you, that they awed the so-called jury, and even Captain John dared not oppose them on the testimony given. That they meant to hang you I well enough understood so I stepped in."

"Doctor, we are friends for life," said Buffalo Bill impressively, and the two men clasped hands.

Going on to the Crows' Roost Buffalo Bill had dinner, then called Nervy Nat and Lou Loring to meet him in Captain John's office, where the four talked over the strange hold-ups of the coaches by the mysterious personage known as the Wandering Jew.

"I will go and try and pick up his trail, but let me simply suggest to you, Captain John, that when you had the power to charge me this morning, had you done so upon such evidence, you and your whole camp would have found that there were men enough to avenge me; so go a little slow in future when a Government officer is the one accused."

"Now let me know what I owe for that poor fellow's funeral expenses?"

"We'll call it square, as I made a mistake I freely admit."

"No, sir; I shall pay the bill," and Buffalo Bill did so, after which he mounted his horse and rode away from Grizzly Gulch, considerably impressed by his experience there.

He was nearing the spot where the Wandering Jew had last been seen, and twilight was coming on, so he made up his mind to camp until the morrow, when suddenly he saw a party of horsemen ride out of a thicket on his right.

They were five in number, but suspecting no danger he never swerved from his path.

In a few minutes they were close upon him, when, as he was about to speak pleasantly, the leader called out:

"You are Buffalo Bill are you not?"

"I am."

"Then I arrest you as the murderer of a man known as the Wandering Jew—Hands up!"

With the words the leader held his bowie-knife close to the body of Buffalo Bill.

CHAPTER VII.

A SURPRISING REVELATION.

THE words of the leader of the horsemen fell with startling suddenness upon Buffalo Bill's hearing for he had anticipated no trouble from that quarter.

Then, too, the charge that he was the murderer of the Wandering Jew, a mysterious individual whom he had never seen, yet one whose trail he was even then in search of, was enough to surprise, if not startle him.

At first he had believed the five horsemen to be troopers; then he noticed that they were not in uniform, and had concluded they were miners, when they so unexpectedly made their charge of murder.

Sudden as it all was, the scout's first thought and impulse was to resist, but, the four followers of the accuser were within a few paces of him, each with a cocked revolver in his hand.

Resistance under such circumstances was the height of rashness, so Cody calmly asked:

"Who are you?"

"Regulators in this land of lawlessness," was the reply.

"The Army is the Law out here, and that alone I acknowledge."

"You have to obey or die."

"What is your wish?"

"You are the Chief of Scouts at Fort Platte?"

"Yes."

"Your name is Buffalo Bill?"

"I am so called; but my name is William F. Cody. Anything more to ask?"

"Where are you just from?"

"Grizzly Gulch mining-camp."

"Where were you going?"

Buffalo Bill hesitated a moment as to what to say, but then answered boldly:

"I was starting on the trail of the very man whom you just now accused me of murdering."

"That is nonsense for he is dead."

"It is the truth; but tell me who and what is this man you have called the Wandering Jew?"

"Do you pretend not to know?"

"I do not know."

"Then why did you say, a moment ago, that you were starting upon his trail when we came upon you?"

"That is true, for I was ordered by General Burr, of Fort Platte, to go to Grizzly Gulch and find the man, or learn all I could about him."

"And why?"

"I will answer your question, though I consider it none of your business."

"It was because he had been holding up coaches of late on several trails, and though not robbing them, General Burr wishes to know his motive, or if his acts are those of a madman."

"And what did you learn at Grizzly Gulch?"

"That he had held up the coaches out of that camp."

"And so you followed him and murdered him."

"You lie! I am not one to murder any man."

"Yet he is dead."

"Of that I know nothing."

"Do you say that, when you were arrested for a murder in Grizzly Gulch, tried in mock fashion and set free, after which you boldly attended the burial of the man you had killed?"

Buffalo Bill was silent for full a minute.

He had become indignant at the charge against him, and had fearlessly branded it as a lie.

Now he saw that his accusers were speaking of a different man than the one he had in mind, and his thoughts were busy before he should made answer.

At length he responded:

"See here, this is a case of five to one, and in any argument against such odds I would get the worst of it; but, as I am accused, and held at a disadvantage, I will explain matters as best I can, for I see that you are on the wrong trail."

"How is that?"

"You accuse me of murdering one called the Wandering Jew?"

"Yes."

"He is a person I never met, but was intending to trail when you came upon me."

"Yet you were at his burial to-day, and was charged in Grizzly Gulch with murdering him."

"You are away off, there, for the man I was accused of murdering, by some fellow who had a grudge against me, and hence lied, I did kill, and—"

"You admit the murder then?"

"See here, I don't like your terms, so be more careful in your choice of words."

"I said I killed him, and to shoot a man in self defense is not murder."

"I was on my way into Grizzly Gulch last night, was fired at from ambush, the bullet cutting this hole in my hat, which you can see by the moonlight, and my frightened horse bounded off with me, though I fired one shot in the direction of the flash."

"I kept on to Grizzly Gulch; was sent for at dawn this morning to see a dying man, and he I found to be an old soldier; my random shot had done its work."

"He had recognized me after he had fired; then he sought shelter in a cabin, and before he died he wished to ask me to do a certain duty for him."

"And that man was the Wandering Jew," insisted the leader, sternly.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ALTERNATIVE.

FOR a moment Buffalo Bill was disconcerted by the unexpected and startling announcement that the Gentleman Vagabond

was none other than the Wandering Jew Road-Agent.

But an instant's thought convinced him that such could not possibly be the case, and with a light laugh, he said:

"Why, stranger, you are clear off the trail, for it was positively no such thing."

"We'll argue that later, and not here."

"Come, men, we'll seek a camp, and then get at the truth, for this man must suffer the penalty of his crime."

With this the party started on. Buffalo Bill riding by the side of the leader, while two of the men were in advance, two in the rear.

Escape under such circumstances was impossible, yet, as though knowing the daring character of his prisoner, the spokesman or chief held the rein of the scout's horse in his hand.

Coming to a clump of timber, leafless and charred, from having been swept by a fire some time before, the party halted not far from where a spring bubbled up from the earth.

The horses were not staked out, as Buffalo Bill had supposed they would be. The men merely dismounted and surrounded him, for he had leaped from his saddle and stood before them, utterly defenseless, as his belt of arms had been removed.

"Now, Buffalo Bill, we know you, know your gallant record, and that you are chief of scouts at Fort Platte."

"But we also hold power. We are a band who regulates this wild country, and act as best suits our purpose."

"We offer you no explanation other than to say that you have been arrested by us for the murder of one known as the Wandering Jew."

"Who he was, or what he was, concerns us, not you. By your own confession you shot the man known to us as the Wandering Jew, and he gave to you a dying request of a duty you were to perform for him."

"Did you accept the trust?"

"I did."

"We know that you attended the burial of the man you killed, that you paid all the expenses; and we are also aware, from your own words, that you were now bound upon what you were pleased to term the trail of the Wandering Jew, but which we are certain was nothing else than to carry out the mission bequeathed to you by him, to perform."

"It is false."

"So you say."

"And so I repeat. It is utterly false, as is the fact that the man who fired on me, and whom my random shot killed, was the mysterious road-agent you call the Wandering Jew, and I can prove it."

"How?"

"By both Lou Loring and Nervy Nat, the stage-drivers at Grizzly Gulch."

"They are not here."

"They are at Grizzly Gulch."

"What proof have they?"

"Simply, that they were held up fifty miles apart by this Wandering Jew, one at Black Water Creek, and the last was halted while the Gentleman Vagabond was dying in the cabin of the Brewer Boys."

These words seemed to create a sensation, for the five men stepped apart and conversed together for a few minutes.

Then they surrounded the scout who had coolly awaited their pleasure.

"It is not for us to try you, Buffalo Bill, but our duty is to arrest and be sure you shall be held for trial, if guilty as accused."

"You make a statement greatly in your favor if true, but which we doubt."

"When we leave you to the judges who are to try you, they must decide upon your guilt or innocence."

"And who are they, or you, that dare hold me for protecting myself, even though I killed a score of frontier desperadoes?"

"You will know who we are, or at least that we have power to punish guilt, if we find you guilty."

"Now tell me what mission it was that the dying man left to you to do?"

"That is my affair."

"You admit that he left you such a duty?"

"Yes, a legacy I pledged myself to the dying man to fulfill."

"He left money?"

"Twenty dollars in gold, only."

"Where is it, or did you defray his funeral expenses with it?"

"I did not, for I paid the expenses out of my own pocket."

"Where is the money then?"

"In his belt."

"Where is that belt?"

"Safe."

"Where do you mean?"

"Where you will not get it."

"You have intrusted it to another?"

"I put it away where it would be safe, for from my treatment by a few of the hard citizens of Grizzly Gulch I supposed I might be held up on my trail, to see if the Gentleman Vagabond did not leave a fortune."

"Did he leave any papers?"

"He did."

"Where are they?"

"In the hidden belt."

"You will either have to surrender that belt or die," was the emphatic rejoinder by the leader of the five captors of the scout.

CHAPTER IX.

THE REFUSAL.

EVERY eye was upon Buffalo Bill, as the leader uttered the fateful words.

But, there was no flinching, no start of alarm; the scout stood calm and unmoved, surrounded by his accusers.

The moon had now risen well above the horizon and at its full, fell brightly upon the group.

Ghostly looked the trees behind them; deathlike silence and solitude rested upon the plains before them, and the scene was weird and impressive.

In answer to the last words of the leader, Buffalo Bill remarked in a tone of sarcasm:

"Then you lied awhile since when you said I was to be tried by others, for you are my judges."

"No; we will leave you to others, if you refuse to surrender that belt with papers in it. The gold we do not care for as it is so small a sum, but the papers we must have, at any cost."

"Oh, you are millionaire footpads, road-agents seeking only papers that tell of rich finds of gold and all that?"

This was uttered in the same sneering tone, but only to be regretted the moment after, for the question came quickly:

"Then these papers did tell of a rich mine and how to find it?"

"I do not know."

"Why did you say so then?"

"I did not say so."

"What did you say?"

"I asked if you were the kind of a thief who only sought to find big claims?"

"Which those papers told of?"

"I do not know what these papers tell of, not having examined or read them."

"Do you tell the truth?"

"I am of a wholly distinct species from you—I do not lie, steal or cut throats for gold."

"Beware!"

"Of what?"

"Of the Jury of Five."

"Bah!"

"I have just been tried by a jury who could go you one better, and they did not scare me a little bit," was the mocking rejoinder.

"We seek to know the secret you hold, and if you refuse to tell us, then you must stand trial; so I again ask:

"Did the Gentleman Vagabond not tell you the contents of those papers?"

"No, he left them to me to find out."

"Will you tell where that belt with those papers can be found?"

"I will not."

"Then you must take the consequences."

"Being at a disadvantage, I can do nothing else."

As Buffalo Bill uttered the words, two nooses were thrown over his head and he was dragged backward and downward.

At first he determined to resist, and hurled his captors from him as though they were children; but the revolver was covering him, and realizing that resistance was but to incur immediate death, he calmly submitted.

His hat was thrown aside, his boots were

drawn off, and he was thoroughly searched, but nothing more than his own money was found, and not much of that, as the bill of expenses at Grizzly Gulch had been heavy.

Then he was tied to a tree, his horse was fastened near him, and, mounting in grim silence, the five men rode slowly away.

Buffalo Bill was left alone in that weird, desolate spot.

CHAPTER X

ALONE!

THE men had disappeared.

How far had they gone? was the question.

How long would they remain away?

Did they really intend to leave him to his fate?

What that fate would be he well knew, if such was their intention.

Then he asked himself:

"Who were those five judges they spoke of?"

A thought came over him that it was the intention of his captors to leave him there to frighten him.

They might leave him for a day or two, or even three, to starve him into subjection, to prove that they were in deadly earnest.

He was sure of one thing, and that was, if left alone there, it would not be very long before he had company, and of a kind, too, he would not like in his helpless condition.

And they would be as cruel as his captors, for they would be coyotes, ready to skulk with fear from his path if he could protect himself, but to attack him in great numbers if they found him helpless.

The thought was by no means a pleasant one to dwell upon.

There stood his horse, saddled, bridled, and hitched by the rein, not the stake-rope, to one of the charred trees, fifty feet or more distant from him.

Over the expanse of plain before him the eyes of the scout roamed as far as the moonlight allowed him to see.

There was not a moving object in sight.

Upon his left were the barren trees rising grim in the moonlight, and upon his right his eyes suddenly rested upon several mounds; at the head of each one a board was standing, denoting but too plainly that they were graves!

"I never noticed those before. Who is buried there, I wonder?" muttered the scout, with sudden interest.

"There are five of them—yes, just five—I wonder if they are the Five Judges those cut-throats referred to, and who are to rise from their graves to try me?"

"Well, I'd like to see a resurrection, just at this particular time.

"But, this is not far from Black Water Creek, and where the coaches have been held up time and again, often fired upon, and that must be where the unfortunate passengers who were killed were buried.

"Poor fellows! But they are no company for me just now!"

Thus musing his eyes lighted upon his hat, jacket and boots lying near, and he said:

"Why, there is my belt of arms, too, which they have left behind!"

"If I could only free myself and get them in my grasp, those five gentlemen of the road would have to fight hard before they caught me again.

"Ah, good horse, what is it, for you are getting nervous, I see?"

The scout's eyes were now on his horse, which began to grow restless.

"Don't like your surroundings, eh? I don't blame you, for I don't either.

"But, I am not so much alarmed, after all, for you are there, good comrade!"

The horse uttered a low whining, as though he had understood the words of his master.

"Now I'll just see how tight those fellows did tie me."

With this Buffalo Bill began to draw at his bonds.

He had been surprised that the men had not tied his feet also, but when he tugged at the bonds about his wrists awhile he learned that he was secure enough.

"Why this rawhide lasso must have been wet when they tied me!" he muttered, as he pulled and pulled, first with one hand, then with the other, to try and slip it through the bonds that several times went around each wrist.

"Well, I never knew I had such large hands before—what a pity!" he mused in the same indifferent, half-reckless manner that made light of every difficulty he found himself in.

He knew, however, that he was only inflaming his flesh, and would cause it to swell, if he persisted, so he relinquished the attempt, to free his hands.

Then he turned his eyes again upon his horse.

The animal was growing more and more restless.

He seemed to fully realize that his master was wholly helpless, and pulled harder and harder at his reins, for some danger was threatening of which his instinct gave him knowledge.

Another moment and Buffalo Bill saw what that danger was, and which he had half-guessed.

He was no longer alone, for a score of coyotes had suddenly come into sight and were gazing at him with vicious, longing eyes.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FRIEND IN NEED.

BRAVE as he was the sight of the coyotes coming toward him sent a cold shiver through the frame of the helpless and hapless scout.

An arrival that he at other times despised for its cowardice, as all do who know the coyote, he now felt completely at the mercy of the wretched brutes.

He saw that they had recognized by their sharp instinct that he was powerless for they already had approached nearer than they otherwise would, and were snarling and yelping in anticipation of a feast.

The movements of the horse disturbed them somewhat, for the animal was making frantic efforts to free himself, as though he, too, was in bodily terror of the ravenous creatures.

As they came nearer, the scout uttered a shout, and away they scattered.

The horse seemed to feel that they were gone, and he, too, then became quiet.

But it was only for a few minutes, as the brutes soon returned, bolder than before.

Once more the horse began to struggle, and once more the scout gave a shout.

Off went the cowardly creatures, but not so far as before, and they the more quickly turned back toward their intended victim.

Again and again the shout of Buffalo Bill startled them, but each time they went a less distance from him in their retreat, and finally did not run off at all.

But, as they began to sneak nearer and nearer, they suddenly started off, for the now frantic horse, throwing himself backward upon the strong leather rein that held him, broke it, and he fell over on his back with a snort of fright and with a force that seemed to momentarily stun him.

But he was quickly upon his feet, looking about him.

"Oh, poor boy, you are at last free to go your way! Would that I were safely on your back," spoke Buffalo Bill, sadly.

Hearing his master's voice, the intelligent and faithful animal came trotting up to him, uttering a low neigh, as though in sympathy.

He put his nose close to the face of the scout and whinnied again and again.

His intelligence told him well that his master was helpless, and that he had tried hard to get free to go to him.

Another moment and the startled coyotes gained courage to come, snarling, back.

Instantly, with a savage snort, the noble horse started for them, his ears laid flat back, his head outstretched, and his gleaming teeth showing white in the moonlight.

The frightened beasts of prey fled before him, though not until one had been caught by the back between those rows of menacing teeth, and his bones were crushed like pipe stems.

Then upon the brute the horse trampled with savage fury, until all life was crushed out.

"My brave, noble horse!"

"Could I want a truer friend and better protector than you are?" cried the scout, deeply touched by the almost human devotion of his steed—an animal that had been his comrade for two years, on many a lone trail, in many a deadly danger.

But, the horse now became the object of closest interest to the coyotes, whose numbers began to increase rapidly, until Buffalo Bill saw that there were a hundred or more of them, and in their midst he recognized here and there the large, gray wolf of the mountain!

The body of the dead coyote first caught the eyes of the ravenous brutes, and in an instant it was torn to pieces and devoured.

Buffalo Bill fully realized what the fate of his horse would be, and tried to coax him to remain by him, for the two together might be more than the coyotes would attack.

But the faithful horse had his ire aroused, and in spite of the voice of his master, he dashed into the struggling mass that were fighting and wailing over the carcass of the dead coyote.

Whether he tripped on the writhing mass or not, the scout could not tell, but, to his sorrow and horror, he saw the noble animal pitch forward, fall, and in an instant he was covered by the howling, snarling mass of wild beasts.

A cry such as might come from a human being, arose above the yelps, growls and howling of the coyotes, and the faithful horse was dragged to his doom, a most terrible one, for the shouts of the scout were of no avail now, and he closed his eyes to shut out the approaching death-scene of his equine comrade.

He too well knew that his own fate would quickly follow.

Then, suddenly, there was a silence, and the whole flock went yelping to cover.

Opening his eyes, Buffalo Bill almost believed that what he beheld was conjured up by his imagination.

CHAPTER XII.

SIX FORMS IN WHITE.

"My God! am I going mad?"

The words were wrung from the lips of Buffalo Bill by what he saw.

His own utter helplessness, the coyotes thirsting for his blood, the fate of his gallant horse, had told even upon his iron nerves, and he almost began to fear for his reason.

There came the flight of the now frenzied beasts, flying from their feast.

Certainly they would not have fled, blood-drunk as they were, from any ordinary foe!

No one or two men, even, could have driven them from their prey without sending a volley of bullets into their ranks.

But, no horsemen were in sight, no shots had been fired!

Still, the coyotes had fled, skulking sullenly away to cover.

Something had frightened them, certainly—what was that something?

The scout closed and opened his eyes several times to get the mist out of them.

His hands being bound behind the tree at his back, he could not rub the lids. The moonlight shone with a brightness which made all as clear as early twilight.

What it revealed to the staring eyes was the sight which had frightened the coyotes from their feast, and what it revealed had made the scout momentarily believe that he was losing his reason.

There, not two hundred feet from him, he beheld a sight which would, indeed, have driven a less iron-nerved man's reason from its throne.

Filing into sight—coming, as it were, right from the group of graves before referred to, coming out of the shadow of the leafless trees above those lowly mounds, into the full glare of the moonlight, were six forms.

They walked, or rather seemed to glide along, in single file.

They came with slow speed, and a silent, calm dignity that was most awe-inspiring.

Nor was this all. They looked human, yet appeared like the apparition of what had once been human flesh and blood!

Now they seemingly were of a supernatural nature.

If their footfalls made any sound, the keen hearing of the scout did not catch it.

They came not in a straight line toward him, but in a zig-zag manner, perhaps following the trail, as it wound in and out—a game trail leading to the spring near by.

And these six forms were clad in snowy white.

Not only from head to foot, but their white robes trailed along a foot or more behind them, giving them the appearance of giant ghosts.

This height was added to from their heads being covered with white pointed cowls.

The points of these hoods rose above their heads half a foot or more, and in each hood, just where the eyes must be peering through, were two round black spots three inches in diameter.

In the center of these black rings there must be small holes for the eyes to look through, but they could not be seen.

This much the eyes of Buffalo Bill took in fully, and also that their arms hung by their sides with long, loose sleeves concealing them.

This sight it was which had so startled the coyotes from their midnight orgy.

And this sight it was that had at first almost dazed the dauntless scout.

But a moment of calm thought and his nerve was firm as a rock once more.

First, he congratulated himself upon having been saved from being torn to pieces by the ravenous, maddened brutes; then, with no belief in the disembodied, uncanny supernatural, he muttered coolly:

"If they were really ghosts, they are to be preferred for company to the coyotes."

"There are six of them, so the odds against me are increasing if they are sprits out on a death-trail."

"Now what are they about?"

They had halted; their arms were waved wildly, but in silence; then they all pointed down at the ground, when, from beneath their robes, suddenly, appeared spades and four of them set to work to dig.

What was it they were digging there for?

Was it a treasure?

The scout soon discovered, and it was by no means a pleasant discovery.

"They are digging a grave," he murmured.

Steadily at their work they kept, until the grave was finished. That done, they moved in a body toward him, making no answer to his questions. Silently unfastening him from the tree, yet keeping his arms tied behind him, they led him to the brink of the grave, one of them pointing down into it, while another aimed a revolver at him, saying in a deep voice:

"Now, Buffalo Bill, you are to be tried for your life, here, over your open grave."

CHAPTER XIII.

OVER AN OPEN GRAVE.

Well it was for Buffalo Bill that he had nerves of steel; that his brain did not run riot with superstition, or the sight he viewed there, in the moonlight, as he was bound to the tree, certainly would have affected his reason.

His relief at the flight of the coyotes was followed by intense curiosity as to who and what those six forms in white might be. And what was their business there?

He had watched their every move with deepest attention; had seen them produce their white spades, and four of them silently begin to dig.

He watched the four go down deeper, until only their heads and shoulders appeared above the ground.

Two of the six had not lent a hand in the work, but one stood at the head, the other at the foot, and watched the workers.

Still not a word had been uttered, and this made their gruesome proceedings more impressive and incomprehensible.

At last they had finished and moved toward him.

Still no sound escaped their lips.

In his half reckless, half humorous way, he had said:

"Well, Spirit Pards, you've got astray, hain't you, from the Happy Hunting Grounds?"

There was no response, but they si-

lently proceeded to untie the scout from the tree, but had been particular not to free his hands.

"What; going to take me, too?"

"I do not mind bottled spirits, but I don't just like the graveyard extract, I assure you."

Still no reply.

The grave was reached, the scout placed in position, and the fateful words were uttered that end the last chapter.

Whatever Buffalo Bill felt at heart, he had too brave a nature, too complete control over himself, to betray the least fear, and the eyes turned upon him did not detect a flinch, a change of expression in his face.

One stood behind him, a hand on each shoulder, while another had firm hold of his right arm.

One faced him across the yawning grave, and the outstretched hand held a revolver leveled full at the breast of the unmoved scout.

Another also stood just across the grave, his hand pointing down into its depths, and he it was who had spoken.

The others were grouped facing him, and the whole grim scene was lighted up by the effulgence of the moon, then at its full.

There stood the scout, coatless, hatless, bootless, but unintimidated, though so helpless and hapless.

If die he must, they should see that he was not a craven; that he did not shrink from an appalling doom.

"What am I to be tried for?" demanded Buffalo Bill, quietly, in response to the words of the leader.

"For your life."

"And who are you that claim to try a man for his life? Tell me that!"

"Judge Doom, and his Jury of Five."

"That seems to indicate that you doom before trial; that your Jury of Five has already rendered a verdict of guilty."

"No; you die or live as the jury determines after hearing what you have to say."

"Of what am I accused?"

"First, of murder."

"Anything else?"

"Theft."

"Of theft, eh? Who are my accusers?"

"Facts."

"Facts? Then facts is a liar from way-back."

"Speak not too lightly with your grave yawning before you, for facts are stern and truthful accusers."

"Whom have I murdered?"

"A man known as the Wandering Jew."

"Just as false as a liar can make it. I never even saw the Wandering Jew."

"You were tried in Grizzly Gulch for his murder."

"More lie to the quart. I was not; I was tried for the killing of a poor, wandering tramp, known as the Vagabond Gentleman."

"Yes; he was the Wandering Jew."

"See here! I discussed that matter before to-night with you, or others of your cutthroat gang, and told you that I was proven to have shot that man at random, firing in self-defense, as I was fired upon, and the dying man's own testimony admitted as much, while, as a proof that I had not willfully sought his death, he left me a legacy, the carrying out of a duty which he could not perform, so had to delegate to one he could trust."

"That man was, as I have stated, known as the Gentleman Vagabond, and the one you accuse me of murdering was, at the very moment the other lay at death's door, holding up a stage ten miles from Grizzly Gulch!"

"That is the fact of the case, and you make me tired in still charging two men to be one and the same."

Buffalo Bill spoke in an impatient, indignant tone, but was heard to the end without interruption.

Then the leader spoke:

"Suppose we grant, for the sake of argument—though, mind you, we do not be-

lieve it—that the Wandering Jew was not the man known as the Gentleman Vagabond?"

"Well, what then?"

"You have, by your own confession, been guilty of robbery."

"You have a tongue that can't be trusted into uttering the truth, when you accuse me of stealing, but give me statement: In what way have I been guilty of robbery?" was the hot reply.

"You have asserted that the man you killed left you a legacy, but it is false; in reality you robbed his body after death of the belt he wore, and which contained gold and important papers, representing a fortune," asserted the spokesman of the masked six.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SENTENCE.

There was no doubt of the indignation felt by Buffalo Bill at this charge of the masked and self-constituted judge.

The accusation of murder did not strike him so keenly as did that of having committed theft, after the man's death, and his anger showed in his heaving breast and flashing eyes, the moonlight revealing how brightly they burned.

The fear of impending death had not moved him to show emotion, but the charges of being a murderer and a robber did break down his reserve, and he said, in low, suppressed tones:

"You have me at your mercy, and, after all this mummery, meant to inspire terror in me, you may, or may not, kill me; but I warn you that if you do not now murder me, some day my time of reckoning with you will come, and the rope will be your end, you detestable coward and villain!"

The Jury of Five, as the hooded and enveloped forms had been termed, had not before uttered a sound, but, at the words of the irate scout, they, with their leader, or principal, burst forth in a chorus of mocking laughter.

This derisive response to his threat and fierce invective at once calmed Buffalo Bill, who said, in even tones now, as he brought himself under perfect control again by the quick exertion of his strong will:

"Come, go on with your mockery of justice, and have it over with, either for or against me."

"It is for you to say whether you shall go free or die here and now, Buffalo Bill, by a horrid death."

"To me it looks quite the other way. You have the say so; not I."

"But what else have you to propound? Out with it!"

"It is for you to say," was the response.

"What is it you wish? What is behind all this flummery and nagging?"

"Where are those papers which you took from the body of the Wandering Jew?"

"There you go again, calling the man I killed the Wandering Jew."

"Well, to please you, as you seem so particular, where are the papers you took from the Gentleman Vagabond?"

"Safe! You can bet high on that!"

"What do you call safe?"

"As I told you when you first rode upon me like outlaws as you are, and covered me with your guns—"

"Not so; we are not outlaws; we are the Judge and Jury of Five, sent to try those whom our Ranger Regulators capture."

"They ran you down as one who was guilty of crimes that should be punished, or atonement made."

"They bound you, and notified us, and now we are here to know what atonement you will make, or what punishment, you failing to do so, we will mete out to you."

"Well, whether you be the Regulators or the Jury, you belong to the same cowardly gang, and it was just because I suspected that such as you might over-haul me on the trail that I took the precaution to place those papers, entrusted to me by a dying man, where no prow-

ing cutthroats and thieves could get them."

"And you left them in Grizzly Gulch?"

"I did not say that I had."

"Where else could you have left them?"

"That is for you to find out."

"You refuse to tell?"

"I do, absolutely refuse."

"Beware!"

"Of what?"

"Death!"

"I have told you that those papers are safe, and that is all I will say."

"Then you take your own life."

"No; you murder me."

The "Judge" turned to the Jury and waved his hand.

In silence they moved to the other side of the open grave, and ranged themselves in a row.

Buffalo Bill watched them attentively.

They faced him, and then the Judge, standing at one end of the grave, said, in his deep voice:

"Jury of Five!"

"Here!"

The Five answered in chorus.

"You are here to try a fellow-being for life or death."

"We hear!"

"You have heard that he has taken the life of a man in cold blood."

"We have!"

"Therein the hooded court and the Jury of Five lie like pirates," interjected Buffalo Bill, in his reckless way.

"Silence, prisoner. You have been given a chance to confess and to atone, and have refused."

"Better gag me, if you don't wish to hear the truth."

"Silence!"

"Jury of Five, you have also heard that this prisoner robbed the man whom he killed of a belt containing gold and most valuable papers."

"We have."

"Say, Judge, how do you and the Jury happen to know how valuable those papers are?" asked the scout, now seeming to have struck a new trail.

Unheeding the question, the masked man went on:

"You have also heard, Jury of Five, that the prisoner has been given the alternative of confessing where that belt is, and of giving it up to us, and he refuses."

"We have."

"Jury of Five, I ask for your verdict."

"Guilty."

"And your sentence?"

"Death!"

"Prisoner, do you confess your guilt, and will you atone by giving into my hands that belt?"

"I have had no reason to change my mind by all this palaver."

"Then, Buffalo Bill, I sentence you to death here in this grave."

"You are to be bound hands and feet, thrown in this grave, and there you die, for you shall be buried alive!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE WANDERING JEW.

Even the iron nerve of Buffalo Bill thrilled at the inhuman sentence of the hooded judge.

Even he was appalled at the awful doom apparently now to be enforced, and from between his shut teeth came the low uttered words:

"My God!"

The six men regarded him in perfect silence, the eye of each one resting upon his face and trying to read it.

But it showed not what thoughts were passing through his brain.

Not a muscle quivered, not an expression revealed what he really felt.

"Come, we have waited too long," urged the Judge, sternly.

"Waited for what?"

"Your confession. Are you not appalled at the thought of being buried alive?"

"It isn't just the pleasantest way of crossing the Great Divide, though nobody

has ever come back to tell us just which was the best method of crossing."

The men looked at each other now, evidently disconcerted by the man's apparent utter indifference to death.

They could not understand such nerve and defiance.

Stepping around to the side of the grave, the Judge held a whispered conversation for several minutes with the Jury of Five, their heads being all close together.

Then they were startled by the scout saying:

"If I only had a shotgun I'd get the whole flock of carrion buzzards at one shot."

An oath broke from the lips of the "Judge."

The doomed man was actually deriding and scorning them!

"Buffalo Bill, you are a brave man, but now bring your whole nerve to your support, for you have but five minutes to live."

"I shall count those minutes out to you, and a word from you, before the five elapse, will save you from your awful doom."

"Make it six minutes, Judge, one minute for each of you."

"So be it, then; you have six minutes in which to decide whether you live or die."

"Thanks, for nothing."

The Judge took out a watch, which the moonlight revealed to be a handsome gold one, and, catching the eye of Buffalo Bill, the provoking prisoner asked tauntingly:

"Who did you rob of that watch, Judge?"

As no reply came, the scout continued: "I should have thought it would have melted where your spirit came from, Judge."

No response.

The Judge was looking at the face of his watch.

"One!"

The first minute of the six had passed.

"Two!"

The scout was silent now.

Thus the minutes were called off.

"Bind him securely and throw him into the grave!" came the final order.

But as the Jury of Five moved to obey there broke upon the night air a voice which all heard:

"Don't kill dot mans, for I vas not dead."

"I vas be te Vandering Jew!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FLIGHT.

The words startled all who stood around that grave.

The Jury of Five stood like white statues, struck dumb, as it were, with surprise.

The Judge, likewise, stood silent and dazed, gazing in the direction whence the words came.

Buffalo Bill had turned quickly at the sound of the voice, to discover the speaker.

The timber was behind him, a hundred or more feet away, and the scout's eyes fell upon the form of a man standing there in the moonlight as though he had just emerged from among the trees.

Yes, there he was, the man described by those who had seen him—a tall person, with broad shoulders, dressed in buckskin, wearing a cap, and with long hair and beard.

This much the bright moonlight revealed, and more.

It revealed that the man was in the group of graves, that he was folded upon his broad back, and that his eyes were upon the group of masked executioners and their bound prisoner.

An instant only he stood thus, while not a word was uttered by the Judge and Jury of Five.

But Buffalo Bill spoke:

"Why, Judge Ghost, there's the Wandering Jew, the very man you accuse me of killing."

With a bound the man spoken of

sprang back into the shelter of the timber and vanished.

"After him!"

So shouted the Judge.

He seemed to be suddenly brought to a realization of the situation by the words of the scout.

The spell was broken, and like one man the six sprang away in pursuit.

And Buffalo Bill was left standing alone at the grave!

"There he goes!" came back from the timber.

"Halt or we fire!"

As shots rang out, the command to halt was seemingly not obeyed.

But Buffalo Bill, now on the "free list" once more, did not tarry by the grave. Off he sprang, running straight toward the timber. Quickly he came to where his jacket, hat, boots, and belt of arms had been thrown. These he could pick up in but one way, which he proceeded to do.

Dropping to the ground, he rolled over on his back, gathered the belt of weapons and boots, and, turning over again, seized his jacket and hat in his teeth.

That accomplished, he sped away like a deer straight out across the plain toward where loomed up in the distance a range of hills.

In his stocking feet though he was, he ran easily, now and then hearing the distant report of a revolver, which meant that the pursuit of the Wandering Jew was still kept up by his ghostly pursuers.

At last he came to a sink in the plain, and there halted, and dropping the things he had safely carried, he lay down upon his back—not to rest, for, drawing his bowie knife from its scabbard, he turned it over until the sharp side of the blade touched the thongs which bound his wrists.

Holding the hilt in his two first fingers and thumb, he began to work the blade back and forth, being most careful not to let the keen edge touch his flesh.

The pressure of the blade soon began to sever the rawhide thongs; strand after strand was cut. The left hand was soon freed, and to release the other was the work of an instant.

The scout's arms were stiff from having been bent back so long. The wrists were swollen, and the hands benumbed; but, rubbing them together, the hands soon recovered, and beating his arms around his body, as a man does when his fingers are cold, the circulation ere long was fully restored. Then, taking up his belt, he strapped it about his waist, with the grim remark:

"Now, if the Secret Six come after me I'll make ghosts in reality of some of them."

"No burying me alive at this stage of the game!"

With this he sat down and drew on his boots.

His hat was next placed on his head, and his jacket drawn on.

"Now I am myself again—only afoot, and I don't like that much."

"My poor old horse, what a fate was his! Bad as the one I was threatened with."

"I'll make coyotes suffer for this night's work."

"Now, which way? I must keep clear of those fellows, but I must get back to get my saddle, for in its secret pocket are the papers I would have given up rather than be buried alive; but, much good would they have done the Judge and his Jury of Five, whatever good they might have done me. Ah! there come some horsemen, and I must lie low, for I've had excitement enough for one night."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RED RAIDERS.

The horsemen whom Buffalo Bill saw coming directly toward him were yet quite a distance away, but he saw them distinctly, and could tell that they were a score at least in number, which convinced him that they were Indians.

The trail they were following led within half a dozen paces of his standing

place, and would take them to the timber where yawned the open grave which had been dug for him.

It was, then, at the spring that they were doubtless going to camp for the rest of the night.

Not far from where he was the scout observed a gully several feet in depth upon the brink of which here and there grew bunches of sage brush.

Instantly he crept to this gully, got into it, and discovered that he would be well hidden unless some curious redskin should take a notion to ride over and have a look into the hiding place.

He could peer through the sage brush and get a good view of the horsemen as they passed, not forty feet from him as the open trail ran.

Having concealed himself, he awaited the approach of the red riders.

They came along at a walk, and in single file, their leader being a dozen yards in advance.

This leader, the scout discovered, wore the full-feathered war-bonnet of a big chief.

But, what most struck the scout was the horse which the warrior bestrode.

It was as white as snow, with long, gaunt body, cleanly built limbs, a small head, and with the appearance of being a long-enduring racer.

"My own beautiful horse Paleface, that the Indians captured from the fort two months ago!" the hidden watcher murmured, his face alight with pleasure.

"If I gave a call, I guess I could astonish that chief a little bit, for Paleface would come right to me."

"Providence must have sent that four-footed pard back to me, and I'll have him or lose my scalp!"

So mused Buffalo Bill as the Indian chief went slowly by the spot where he lay in hiding.

Then he began to count the chief's followers as they passed.

There were twenty-one in all, and they led a dozen horses, all loaded down heavily with packs.

They rode slowly along, as though their horses were tired, and they themselves were worn out.

"They've been on a raid, and I'll bet have taken scalps as well as plunder and horses in the settlement they must have struck."

"Yes, that was the young chief Red Spirit and his band, the most daring Indian raiders to be found."

"But I want Paleface, and will make a big try to get him."

"I wonder how Judge Ghost and his Jury of Five will get along with the redskins, for they must be back in the timber by this time."

"They scared off the coyotes, but I don't know how it will be with the Indians. I only hope that it may prove a Kilkenny-cat affair, for my sake."

The Indians had passed on, but the scout still kept his position.

At last they faded away from sight, like grim spectres, in the moonlight, vanishing in the distance toward the dark line which marked the timber where the scenes of the night just narrated had occurred.

Waiting for some time, and hearing no shots, Buffalo Bill said:

"They have either not found those ghostly fellows in the timber, or have passed on and not camped there."

"I will wait a while longer and see what happens."

For half an hour longer he stayed in his cover, and still no sound came from the timber; then the scout left the gully and began to walk along the trail the Indians had taken.

As he approached the timber he suddenly saw some dark objects near it.

"They are there, for those are their horses, staked out this side of the spring."

"They must be very tired, for I have not heard a sound."

"As for the Judge and his Jury, they must have seen the Indians coming and lit out."

"Now I'll go slow myself, for I don't

wish a fight or a footrace to-night, but I must not delay, for it is a long way to yonder hills, and there is no hiding place between here and there when daylight comes, and the dawn is not so very far off."

So saying, the scout once more advanced, but, not wishing to be taken for a man, he took a revolver in each hand, stooped over, and using them for supports, began to approach slowly, in a zigzag way, as a deer would walk or move while feeding along the trail.

As he drew nearer he saw the horses of the Indians all staked out, and among them was his matchless steed, Paleface.

But he also made another discovery. An Indian sentinel sat on the ground between him and the horses, his arms crossed on his knees, his head resting on his arms, as though he were asleep.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DARING VENTURE.

"If that redskin is not asleep, I'll eat my hat," was Buffalo Bill's comment.

"They are all dead tired if the sentinel gives up this quick."

"Well, it's all in my favor, and if the Ghost Jury didn't carry off my saddle and bridle, I'll make a try for it as well as for horse pard Paleface."

"The reds didn't even eat supper before they turned in, and if I have to do it, that Indian sentinel must breakfast in the Happy Hunting Grounds."

With this, Buffalo Bill, still in his bent posture, approached the silent redskin sentinel.

He was glad to see that the horses were between him and the others in the timber, for then, any sound that might be made would be attributed to the animals, some of which were lying down.

Nearer and nearer the scout approached, until he was within a few feet of the sleeping Indian. A moment he there paused, then he replaced his revolvers and drew his knife, and with a quick, catlike movement, he stepped to the side of the sentinel; his left hand grasped the red throat with a grip not to be shaken off; then the knife did its terrible work.

There was only a moan, the tired Indian never waking to a realization of the manner of his death.

Gently the scout laid him back on the ground, while he muttered:

"I don't like this work of killing. Had he been a white man I could have forced him to silence under fear of death, and taken him prisoner—but an Indian, no!"

"He would have given his war-cry of warning, if he had died for it that moment."

Taking the blanket of the Indian warrior, he wrapped it about him.

That done, he immediately sought the spot where his dead and torn horse lay, to find that the saddle and bridle were still on the mangled animal.

Quickly Buffalo Bill removed them, all blood-stained as they were; then he strode back to where the Indians' horses were, and beheld the forms of the sleeping redskins as they were scattered about in the timber.

Reaching his white steed, he spoke his name in a low tone.

Instantly the horse showed recognition of his name and his master, rubbing his nose against him, but snorting at the scent of blood on the saddle and bridle.

But a low word calmed him, and Paleface as hurriedly saddled and bridled, stake-pin pulled up.

At once led him from the horses' ground, and was preparing to mount, when the bold idea entered his mind to try and get the pack saddles, and run off with all the horses!

But he soon saw that the packs were safe among the sleeping braves; that made his daring scheme impracticable.

But he could at least stampede the horses and leave the sleeping redskins afoot; so all the stake-pins were pulled up, one by one, the ropes fastened about the necks of the horses, and then, in the

glare of early dawn, as it was now, Buffalo Bill leaped into his saddle and started the horses off at a run, with a shout and a shot.

As they bounded away in a stampede he suddenly saw them dash to one side, and found himself in the very midst of five mounted warriors who were coming to the timber!

He knew, in an instant, that it was the rear guard of the party encamped in the timber, and a glance showed him the numbers he had to deal with.

Fortunately for him, he already had a revolver in each hand, and the Indians were taken completely by surprise, evidently believing the guard was driving the horses to water, until they saw the scout and heard his shout and shot.

But, before they could recover from their surprise, Buffalo Bill had ridden into their very midst, and his revolvers were ringing out death-knells at every shot.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE STAMPEDE.

No man could realize more quickly when he was in a desperate situation than could Buffalo Bill, or act more quickly and with better judgment to extricate himself from it.

The thought that the Indians who had passed him, while he had been crouching in the gully, and had gone into camp in the timber, had not impressed his mind in his anxiety to capture his stolen horse Paleface, and on him make his escape.

So preoccupied had he been in getting the animal saddled and bridled, in pausing to loosen the stake-pins of the other horses, in spite of the dawn at hand, that he had neither seen nor heard the approach of the rear guard of redskins.

Only the fact that the Indians were utterly broken down and slept late had enabled him to accomplish what he had, and when he had leaped into the saddle, given a shot and a shout to stampede the horses, he suddenly, as the animals dashed away, discovered that he had to fight for it to make his escape.

He had not feared the sleeping Indians, for he was all of a hundred yards from them and had noticed as he passed them that only several of them had guns.

Awakened as they would be in alarm, he knew he could place another hundred yards between him and the reds in camp before they could fire upon him.

But he was indeed a surprised man when into the midst of five mounted warriors he had suddenly dashed.

Every one of the bucks was asleep as they rode, their weary horses guiding them to camp, and they, too, were rudely awakened by the shot and the shout.

While they were collecting their wits, Buffalo Bill took in the situation, and the two who were handling their guns—for the five all carried rifles—fell from their horses, each brought down by a revolver bullet, one shot from the right hand, the other from the left.

Wheeling in his saddle, Buffalo Bill fairly made his revolvers rattle as he dashed away, firing now at the Indian ponies, not their riders, his purpose being not to leave a redskin mounted.

One pony fell, throwing his rider heavily; a second was wounded in the leg and was useless, but the third he missed, for the daring rider rushed right on after the scout; while the two horses, freed of their riders by the first shots, joined in the stampede.

"I must stop that fellow, or he may hurt Paleface or myself," decided the scout; so immediately halting, he raised his revolver and took deliberate aim.

The wary brave, realizing that he could not fire first, wheeled his horse to the left, and threw himself upon one side of the animal, clinging with one leg and arm to protect his body.

But Buffalo Bill's wonderful aim was true; the bullet struck the leg over the horse's back, and down fell the red rider.

But even then the buck was game, the

scout saw, for he held on to the pony, though dragged a few rods before he could halt him.

"You must go, too, pony," cried the scout, and dashing back toward the redskin, he emptied his revolver until he saw the Indian's pony fall.

Fortunately for the scout, the pony fell upon the red rider, as he squatted there upon the ground, his rifle at his shoulder.

That his aim would have been true the scout believed, but the wounded pony tumbled over upon him, destroying his aim and evidently crushing him.

The rifle was discharged, though the bullet flew wild.

Wheeling Paleface as though on a pivot, Buffalo Bill darted off like an arrow in pursuit of the stampeded horses.

He was not a moment too soon, as the Indians from the camp had run to the scene and were firing bullets and arrows after the venturesome scout, whom they evidently recognized, for they called his name several times.

The arrows fell short, but the bullets pattered about the flying horseman, yet without doing any harm.

Knowing that he would be well out of range before they could load and fire again, Cody gave his defiant war-cry, so well known to the redskins, and continued on after the stampeded animals.

He soon skilfully grouped them together, and headed them toward the distant range, remarking dryly:

"Well, I guess I've got horses to sell. Yes, there are thirty-two in that band, and Paleface makes thirty-three, so there's luck in odd numbers.

"And not an Indian left mounted, for that one left there is crippled and of no use.

"But I have not yet done with you, Mister Lo, as you will find out."

CHAPTER XX.

CUNNING OVERMATCHED.

Buffalo Bill's capture certainly was a valuable one, for though there were half a dozen Indian ponies among the lot, and they were good ones, the rest of the herd were fine ranch and road animals the Indians had picked up in their raid.

Then, too, he had retaken his stolen Paleface, an animal without an equal for speed and endurance upon the border.

Outside of this valuable capture, the scout had killed the Indian sentinel, shot two dead from their saddles, and wounded another, while the warriors in camp had been left dismounted, nearly a hundred miles from their village, and with a large lot of plunder which they could not possibly carry away with them.

It was not to be wondered at that Buffalo Bill smiled in triumph at his victory, and muttered:

"After all, Judge Ghost and his Jury did me a favor, though I can but feel sad over the terrible death of my good horse.

"Just where the Judge and his Jury are I should like to know about now.

"Hold on, Paleface! We'll slow up, for we'll halt on yonder little stream and go into camp for a while.

"Fortunately they left my rifle slung to my saddle, and did not disturb my haversack of provisions, so I am by no means in hard luck."

The scout by that time had ridden some three miles from the Indian camp, and coming to a rise had discerned a little valley through which ran a small stream.

Once there he rounded up his horse-herd, and allowed them to get water and then to go to feeding, but staking his own horse as a decoy for them to keep near.

This done, he built a fire and cooked his breakfast of bacon, crackers and coffee, after which he went quietly about catching the horses and staking them out.

"I'll take you, old fellow," he said to a fine sorrel, "for I have no idea of being left on foot, should a bullet catch Paleface, who goes with me too, as the Ghost

might appear and round up my herd while I am gone."

With this he resaddled and bridled Paleface, mounted, and with the sorrel in lead he rode back over the trail he had come.

Suddenly, as he was nearing the top of the rise, he halted with the words:

"Well, I guess not!"

"We'll look out for redskins, pard Paleface. They will think I will halt here to rest and round up my herd, so they hope to catch me asleep.

"They know I'm all alive, and they'll take the chances of the three mile run in hopes they will find me napping, so I'll just take a squint over the hill to see what I shall see."

With this he dismounted, staked the two horses with the remark: "I'll not leave you free, Paleface, for I don't know whether you've forgotten what I have taught you while you have been in bad company. One thing is certain: Young chief Red Spirit has taken the best of care of you, and I thank him."

With this Buffalo Bill walked on up the hill, threw himself flat on the ground and peeped over the hill-crest. A strange smile quickly fitted over his countenance as he looked, and he muttered:

"I was right; five of them. They are not three hundred yards away, and on the trot at that.

"All of them have rifles, too, but I'll just show them the range of my trusty tube."

With this he brought his rifle around, took quick aim and pulled trigger.

The Indian in the lead of the runners went down upon his face and lay motionless.

The pursuers had been coming along at a rapid trot, and as Buffalo Bill had fortunately suspected, beyond a doubt knew of the stream and little valley and believed that he would halt there for the horses to rest after their full speed run of three miles.

Evidently, as Cody had guessed, they hoped to find him off guard, and hence took the chances; five of their best runners and bravest warriors making the pursuit.

Could they have gained the top of the rise they would have had the advantage; but, fortunately, the experienced scout was too well versed in their cunning ways to be entrapped, and then being first at the rise he held the situation.

The four braves halted as abruptly as did their companion who fell, shot through the head, and their eyes at once searched for a vantage ground.

There was none; it was sure death to tarry or lurk there; that they knew; they could only retrace their way to their companions and report what they had discovered.

That decision was immediate; so as one man they turned and took the back trail on the dodging, shifting run.

Instantly Buffalo Bill sprang into sight and uttered his never-welcome war-cry.

At this galling taunt the whole four warriors, wheeled like soldiers and fired.

"Just what I thought; not one of those rifles is dangerous at that distance; but mine is."

In turning to retrace their way, one of the Indians had seized the rifle of their fellow-comrade to carry it back to camp, for firearms were to be treasured then among all the tribes, even though the gun was but an old Springfield musket.

Rapidly on their way again they ran, after seeing that their bullets did not harm the scout, and were speeding at their best when they beheld Buffalo Bill ride into view over the rise, mounted upon Paleface and with the sorrel in lead!

Was their white terror going to ride them down to their death?

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DESERTED WARRIOR.

The four red runners still faster urged their pace, at the sight of the scout on horseback, and seeing this the scout again voiced his taunting war-whoop.

Then they fairly flew over the ground, for that war-cry really "meant business" for them, as they might well understand.

Down the rise Buffalo Bill rode until he came to the body of the dead brave, and then halted.

"It will never do to let him fall a prey to the coyotes, for he is as much human as I am.

"Sorrel, you can carry him to the timber where some gentleman dug a grave for me that will just fit this warrior."

With his lariat he bound the body upon the back of the horse. The flying redskins, glancing back, beheld the scout pause at the body, not wondering what the white man was doing with their dead comrade, for they presumed, as a matter of course, that he was scalping his foe.

Having loaded the body on the sorrel, the scout continued on after the Indians, who had taken advantage of his halt to still further increase their distance ahead of him.

When he again mounted they were fully a mile ahead, and it would not have been an easy task to have overtaken them before they reached the cover of the timber ahead.

Glancing over the field, Buffalo Bill saw that all the rest of the Indians had left the timber. They were heading toward their village in the mountain range beyond the plain.

They had witnessed the failure of their comrades in their attempt to surprise the wary white man and recapture the horses, and so had set out rapidly on foot on the retreat, leaving the runners to follow.

That their dauntless assailant might ride after aid they had a dread, and wished to at least reach shelter in the range and not be caught afoot by pursuers on horseback upon the open plain.

The four runners gained the timber half a mile ahead of Buffalo Bill, but did not halt longer than to get a drink of water at the spring. Then they pushed on after their comrades, who were still a mile ahead of them and moving at a rapid walk, though the scout could see that they were carrying some heavy loads.

"I'll make you drop that plunder," decided Buffalo Bill, and when he reached the timber he found that some of the plunder had been taken along, but much remained, along with the saddles and bridles of the braves.

The dead sentinel had been hastily buried in the grave which had been dug for Buffalo Bill by the Ghost Jury, but it had only been half filled in, as the redskins had departed in too much trepidation to properly complete their work.

The coyotes scattered from the body of the scout's dead horse and the ponies as Buffalo Bill rode up, but he could not resist emptying his revolver at them in revenge and dropping several of the insatiate brutes.

"I'll just swing you up in a tree until I get back, so the coyotes can't get you," and that was the next procedure of the scout. He lifted the dead redskin up above the reach of the large gang of snarling brutes, and with the lariat lashed it there.

"Oh, yes, you run from me now, you cowards; but last night you were determined to tear me to pieces," and so saying Cody rode after the retreating and dismayed Indians.

He noticed that the four runners had overtaken the others, and that all were talking excitedly as they pushed on.

The plain was barren for miles, and there was no place where they could make a stand for a long distance.

The runners, who had had such a sad experience, evidently told of the astonishing range of the scout's rifle, and this had increased the pace of all in the retreat, it being advisable to find shelter from such a weapon.

At a gallop Buffalo Bill pursued, and he could but be struck with the strange situation, one man driving a crowd of red

raiders before him, a third of whom were armed with guns and all with bows and arrows.

"I don't think they've got a long-range rifle in the lot; but I'll find out," and as he came within range for his own weapon he sent a bullet flying over their heads.

They halted instantly; their guns flashed together, but the bullets fell short.

"Old smoothbore muskets, eh, with a shotgun or two which they got on their raid? I could pick them off, one by one, with no danger to myself; but I don't believe in killing without cause.

"Still, they must drop their plunder; but I hope they will not leave their wounded brave behind I see them carrying. Now a shot to show them what I can do, and that they must leave their loot and do their best sprinting."

With this Buffalo Bill raised his rifle and fired without particular aim.

A wild shout of rage went up as one of the braves fell, and for a moment the band was terribly excited and undecided.

Then several shots were sent flying over their heads by their enemy, which reminder of danger stampeded them. All went off at a run, scattering wide apart as they ran and bending low.

Then several shots were sent flying loaded with plunder, so one by one the bucks dropped their burdens; then a dead brave was laid upon the trail, and to Buffalo Bill's great regret he saw the wounded warrior seated on the ground and to his ears came the doleful death-song of the man now deserted by his comrades.

CHAPTER XXII.

A SURPRISED REDSKIN.

"Now I am in for it."

So thought Buffalo Bill as he saw the deserted brave seated in the midst of the plunder hastily thrown away, and whose wild, weird death-song came distinctly to his hearing.

Just why the scout had missed killing them the Indians could not comprehend, for they could not understand any feeling that prompted mercy in his heart.

That he would be killed the deserted brave felt assured. Why should he be spared by this terrible red-slayer?

There lay his dead comrade, just killed at long range, and he expected to soon join his spirit in the Happy Hunting Grounds of his people.

The cautious white rider advanced at a walk.

He did not believe the Indians had left the wounded man a gun, but then they might have done so, and he did not propose to be taken unawares and have the reds return to get his scalp.

He watched the wounded redskin closely, kept his rifle ready for the slightest move, but when he had come within close range he swung the gun by its strap to his saddle-horn and drew a revolver.

But the Indian showed no hostile sign; he still kept up his death-chant.

Glancing over the plain Buffalo Bill beheld the band still all on the run, but from time to time glancing back to watch the fate of their comrade.

He also noticed that they had scattered singly and were stretched out in a line half a mile in length.

But he was now close upon the wounded and deserted redskin. No gun was near him—no weapon of any kind.

His brothers evidently had not believed in leaving weapons with one they regarded as good as dead.

The song continued, now more wild and loud in its utterance; the helpless warrior felt that he had but a few moments to live.

His eyes watched every move of the scout; he beheld him dismount, revolver in hand, and advance toward him.

Buffalo Bill saw a tall, well-formed and handsome young Indian, wearing the war-bonnet of a sub-chief.

He recognized him as the one who had so daringly followed him, and who when wounded had risen to his knees to fire upon him, but had been crushed by his pony falling upon him.

He observed that one leg had been rudely bound up, and there was a cut on his head.

Still the death-song was kept up, though the scout was now within a few paces of him.

"Let my red brother stop his death-song, for he is not to die by my hand," said the scout in the Sioux tongue.

The weird song ended abruptly, and the eyes of the young sub-chief were fixed upon the face of his foe.

"The Red Buffalo does not fear to die. Let the great white chief kill him."

"The white chief neither kills wounded braves, women nor children. Pale-faces are not built that way.

"Let me see how badly the Red Buffalo is hurt."

Then, to the utter amazement of the Indian, Buffalo Bill looked at the wound on his head, which had been made by the hoof of his pony when he fell upon him, and next at the leg.

The wound was an ugly one, the bullet tearing through the calf of the leg, but the bone was not touched, and Buffalo Bill said:

"At the spring I'll dress that leg for you. I could mount you on the sorrel and send you after your people, to tell them that Pa-e-has-ka* does not make war upon them, save when they strike at his people.

"The Red Buffalo has scalps at his belt, I see, three of them, and one is a woman's; but it is your nature to kill and scalp, so I cannot blame you.

"Come, I'll help you upon this horse, and we'll take your dead pard back, and the booty too."

It was no easy task to secure the dead body of the redskin, the wounded brave, and the booty all upon the two horses, but it was done at last, and walking himself the scout started back for the timber.

Arriving there, his first duty was to get some arnica and bandages from his saddle pocket, and carefully dress the bullet-torn leg and the cut on the redskin's head.

Then he took a look after the retreating braves, and seeing that they were miles away now, he spread a blanket for his prisoner to rest upon and told him he was going to bring the herd of horses up, as he was anxious about them.

Mounting Paleface, he took the precaution to take the sorrel along also, but within an hour was back with the whole troop of horses, which he soon had staked out about the spring.

"Now we'll have some dinner, Red Buffalo, and then I've got to go into the undertaking business, for those two dead pards of yours have got to be buried."

The scout set to work to get dinner, and demonstrated to the surprised redskin that he could treat even an enemy as a man and a brother.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SURPRISE.

Buffalo Bill would have preferred not to have been hampered by the wounded redskin; but as he was he determined as a humane man to make the best of it.

He was anxious regarding a return of the outlaw band, whom he designated as "Judge Ghost and his Jury."

Should they return he knew that he must fight for it, and with big odds against him.

He felt that they would naturally come back to see after him, whom they had left bound, standing by the side of the open grave they had dug for him.

Seeing his herd of captured horses, they would naturally so wish to get pos-

* Buffalo Bill's Indian name, meaning Long Hair.

session of them that they would make a good fight for the prize.

But he proposed to defend himself, his horses and his prisoner, as best he could, and—

"I'll make the redskin help me fight them," showed what a defense he would make.

The six "Ghosts" had dashed away in hot pursuit of the man whom they had called the Wandering Jew, and whom they had suddenly discovered to be alive by his appearance there at the moment of their horrible vengeance on Buffalo Bill.

From the hasty pursuit of him they had seemed not only to be determined to capture him, but to kill him rather than he should escape them; that was evident from their frequent shots at him.

This Buffalo Bill could not comprehend, as they were about to put him to death for the crime of having killed that very man! Why, then, should they have pursued with the intent to destroy?

There was something decidedly strange in this phase of the case, but just then Buffalo Bill found himself too busy to think it all over, and try and arrive at a solution of the mystery.

He knew that the white-robed and hooded men had appeared on foot; but he had an idea that their horses were not far away, somewhere concealed beyond the timber through which the Wandering Jew had taken flight.

The Wandering Jew had also appeared on foot, but was not his horse somewhere conveniently near?

So thought the scout.

The Wandering Jew had also sped away like a deer through the timber, and the pursuers had followed like avenging ghosts upon his trail.

But, had they caught him? Had he escaped them? Had any of their shots killed or wounded the mysterious man?

This the scout was very anxious to find out.

As soon as he could bury his dead redskins he wished to make a short scout through the timber and see if he could uncover any trails.

He was anxious to ascertain if the Wandering Jew had been mounted, and also where the outlaws who had captured him had concealed their horses.

That the Wandering Jew had not fired a shot in his flight the scout felt sure from the sound of the firing, it seeming all together and to have come from his pursuers; no return shot from the distance was heard.

Having had dinner, watered his horses, and staked them out again and made the Red Buffalo as comfortable as possible, Buffalo Bill walked over to his saddle with the remark:

"I forgot to see if the package is all safe."

Under the skirt of his saddle was a secret pocket, wherein he was in the habit of concealing important dispatches when carrying them from fort to fort.

From this secret pocket, the existence of which no one would have suspected, he lifted out a large envelope well filled and considerably soiled. It was sealed.

"That's all right," he said. "Now to bury my two dead Indians."

One by one he carried the bodies, the one he had suspended in a tree and the one killed by his random shot among the retreating raiders, and placed them by the half-filled grave.

With his tin plate he threw out the earth until it came to the form which the Indians had placed there, and then, side by side, he laid the others, respectfully clasping their hands upon their breasts, and every now and then keeping a bright lookout across the plains to see that the cunning savages did not return to again make a try to get the horses and his scalp.

He had just spread a blanket over the dead reds when he heard the ring of metal against a stone, and looking up quickly he beheld a dozen horsemen close upon him and coming straight for the grave in which he stood, waist deep!

CHAPTER XXIV.

DEFENDING A FOE.

From the direction the dozen horsemen came Buffalo Bill had not looked for danger.

His eyes had been glancing now and then across the plain, over which the Indian chief, Red Spirit, and his braves had retreated on foot, and then through the timber to see that no foe was creeping upon him from that direction.

The wounded Indian warrior, reclining upon the blanket which the scout had spread for him, had been watching his humane act, burying the Indian dead, until, weak from loss of blood, and tired out, he had dropped off to sleep.

So he did not observe the coming horsemen, either.

They had appeared on the trail by which the Indians had approached the timber; and with the herd of horses between them and the scout, who was most intent upon his work, they had come within pistol-shot range before being discovered.

Buffalo Bill was always a cautious man. Constant living amid danger had made him so; he had, therefore, taken his rifle to the grave with him, and it then lay within reach of his hand, along with his belt of arms, but which he had taken off while at work.

Upon beholding the horsemen close at hand, his first act was to grasp his weapons and stoop down in the grave.

Here he knew he could make a good stand.

What he saw was a party of horsemen, dressed as bordermen and armed with rifles and with revolvers in their belts.

Their horses seemed to have been hard ridden, and the riders had a haggard, wearied look.

A quick count revealed just eleven of the riders.

The first thought of the scout was that they were his former captors and Judge Ghost and his Jury of Five now combined; but a keener glance showed him that he did not recognize among the lot any of the five men who had captured him.

Then, too, several of the faces he had seen before; of that he felt certain. Who they were, and what was their business? This was what he wanted to know ere he came out of that grave, where he was ready to fight for his life, if need be.

But, suddenly, one of the men spurred forward and called out: "Why, pards, it's Buffalo Bill!"

The men gave a cheer and the scout, feeling that he knew their business, sprang out of the grave and raised his hat in salute, while he said to the leader:

"I have met you before, sir, but I don't just recall where."

"My name is Reuben Benson. I am from the Silver Mound settlement, which the accursed redskins raided night before last, and left a red trail behind them. I saw you, Cody, when you were in the settlement half a year ago."

"Yes, I recall you now perfectly, Mr. Benson, but I am sorry your settlement has been made to suffer."

"Yes, men, women, and children were killed, a dozen of them, by the red fiends, who set fire to a number of cabins, and then got away with their booty and some horses."

"We were on this trail."

"Your horses are there, as you see, Mr. Benson, and I guess you'll find considerable of the plunder, too."

"I was so fortunate as to be near and get it away from them."

"What, alone?"

"Yes, sir, I am alone."

"And you had no help?"

"No, sir, for luck came my way."

"There are no comrades near of yours?"

"None, sir. The only one I have with me is yonder wounded redskin," and Buffalo Bill pointed to where Red Buffalo sat upon his blanket, his eyes fastened upon the horsemen.

He had been awakened by the sound of

voices, and the moment that he saw the party of horsemen he felt that he would be killed, and once again he began to chant his death song in a low, hardly audible voice.

The attention of the horsemen had all been devoted, up to that moment, upon Buffalo Bill.

They had seen and recognized their captured horses, and with them a number of others.

They had also seen the booty the Indians had so securely tied up and fastened upon pack saddles, and seeing Buffalo Bill, the open grave, and no Indians in sight, they supposed a party of cavalry had forced them to drop their plunder and fly.

But at the words of the scout all eyes turned upon the wounded Indian, and one of the horsemen shouted out:

"And I'll get his scalp, curse him!"

He was spinning toward him, revolver in hand, when Buffalo Bill leaped forward, grasped his rein, and said sternly, as he threw his horse with sudden force back on his haunches, nearly unseating his rider: "Hold!"

"That wounded Indian is my prisoner, and you shall not harm him."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SCOUT'S THREAT.

"What! Do you dare oppose me in killing an Indian?" yelled the man, now livid with rage at Buffalo Bill's checking him as he did, and his words.

"I do, for the redskin is wounded and a prisoner, and I will protect him."

"Not from me, you will not."

"Yes, from you; and I tell you to your face that none but a coward would kill a wounded man who is wholly at his mercy."

"You dare call me a coward, Buffalo Bill?" almost shrieked the man.

"Your actions speak louder than my words, but I repeat, if you fire on that redskin I shall kill you."

With this the scout stepped back and drew his revolver, for he had buckled on his belt before getting out of the grave.

"I shall kill him, and I have the satisfaction at least of knowing that my pards will protect me from you."

"I do not fear your pards any more than I do you, if they are of the cowardly stripe that you are, and which I cannot believe of them."

The words were fearlessly uttered, and the scout looked squarely into the faces of the men he thus confronted single-handed.

"Hear him, boys! He defies us all."

"But watch me send a bullet through that redskin's head," cried the man who had shown himself so determined to kill the Indian.

"It will be the last act of your life," and Buffalo Bill stood ready to make his threat good.

The leader of the band, Reuben Benson, saw this, and he knew Buffalo Bill, and he called out to his companion:

"Hold, Doyle, for the scout means what he says, and you are in the wrong."

"Does that mean that you will allow me to be shot down like a dog, Benson?"

"It is your quarrel, not ours, and you were wrong to insist upon killing Mr. Cody's prisoner, and a wounded man at that."

"You are man to man, and as you sought the trouble, why should I take sides with you against a Government officer?"

"Yes, and all about laying out an Injun," said another of the party.

"An Indian is human, as you are, and not to be shot down like a coyote."

"Why did you not fight them when you had the chance?" hotly said Buffalo Bill.

This shot seemed to strike home, for some reason, for several of the men laughed, and one said:

"Yes, Doyle, if you had made a stand at your cabin, instead of running for help, they would have been checked at the starting of their raid."

"Well, you can all talk as you please,

but that redskin was one of the leaders of his red devils against our settlement, for I saw him, and he aided in the butchery of women and children, and burning our homes."

"If I recall aright, it was a party of men from Silver Mound settlement who came upon a small village of squaws, children, and old men, a year ago, the braves being away on a hunt, and shot nearly all of them without the loss of a man on your side."

"The Indians have good memories; they are savages; their training is to kill their foes and avenge wrongs, and they but hit back at the slayers of their defenseless people, for they are from the same village."

Some of the party winced under the words of Buffalo Bill, for they were of the party he had referred to, and Dan Doyle had been their leader, but he growled forth:

"You talk as though you never killed an Indian, Buffalo Bill, while, if report says right, there are scores set down to your credit."

"Unfortunately, yes, in the discharge of duty, and in my defense; but I do not fight women, children, decrepid old men, and boys, nor do I slay braves wantonly."

"But this quarrel must end, for that young chief is under my protection. I am going to carry him to the fort, and the man that kills him has me to deal with. Now you know just what to expect."

A malignant look passed over the face of the man Doyle.

He slowly returned his revolver to his belt, dismounted, threw his bridle rein to a comrade, and drawing his knife, said in a sneering way:

"There is nothing mean about Buffalo Bill, so I will spare the life of your red brother; but I wish to know him the next time I see him, and so I shall mark him."

"You shall do nothing of the kind."

"Yes, I shall take a lock of his hair—in fact, scalp him. That is the only compromise I shall make."

All looked at Buffalo Bill.

Tall, slender, broad-shouldered, he yet seemed no match for Dan Doyle, who was several inches over six feet, weighed fifty pounds more than did the scout, and was noted for his great strength, having gained the nickname of "Hercules Dan" on account of it.

But Buffalo Bill stepped in front of him and said quietly:

"As you have put up your revolver, I shall put up mine, but dare to lay hands on that Indian and I'll break every bone in your body."

CHAPTER XXVI.

HERCULES DAN.

When Buffalo Bill uttered the last threat he unbuckled his belt of arms and laid them upon the ground, remarking quietly:

"I feel that I am among honorable men, who will not take advantage of me because I desire to protect that Indian from this bully."

"You are safe, Mr. Cody, without your weapons."

"But you are playing now into the hands of Doyle, let me say, for he has no match on the border for strength—we call him Hercules Dan."

"And in spite of his great strength, he is coward enough to wish to kill a man at his mercy, and I mean just what I said, that if he lays his weapons aside I shall still prevent his harming the Red Buffalo."

"If you can, you mean."

"And you hear me shout, right now, the Red Buffalo will have a better claim to his name when I have done with him, and, Government officer or not, Buffalo Bill will feel sorry that he ever crossed the will of Hercules Dan. You hear me shout."

"Yes, I've heard just such creatures shout before. Do you dare put aside your weapons and sing so loud?"

The man quickly drew his revolvers and laid them upon the ground.

"And your knife?"

"I'll keep that to take the Red Buffalo's scalp lock."

"No, no, Dan!" came a chorus of voices; "play fair!"

"Throw down your knife!"

"Yes, Doyle, put down your knife, for the scout is no match for you as it is, and I ought not allow this fight."

"Let him keep his knife in his belt; I don't fear it, or him," retorted Buffalo Bill, confidently, and, turning to the bully, he continued:

"Now, if you are going to scalp the Red Buffalo, go about it, for while you are fooling here the Indians you pretend to be so anxious to overtake are making good their escape, though on foot."

"Is that so, Mr. Cody?" asked Reuben Benson quickly.

"Yes, I stampeded their horses, leaving all the reds on foot, and they must be now some ten miles ahead of you."

"Only a bluff to crawl out of meeting me; but, here goes for the Injun's scalp."

With this, Hercules Dan started toward the Indian, but with a bound Buffalo Bill barred his way.

The men quickly gathered about, nearly all of them shouting:

"Put down your knife, Dan!"

As though he did not notice the scout, or, seeing him, felt no dread of an encounter with him, Hercules Dan kept on toward the Indian.

As he neared Buffalo Bill he stretched out his hand as though to grasp him, and thrust him aside.

All there saw the giant's arm struck upward; a fist was driven hard into the face of Hercules Dan, who staggered backward, and would have fallen had he not been suddenly seized in arms of iron, raised into the air as though but a boy, and hurled his length upon the ground with a force that was sickening, his knife flying from his hand, and his body lying motionless where it had fallen.

For a moment no word was uttered by the crowd; they could not understand just how it was done.

Hercules Dan had met his match in a way no one had anticipated, and the on-lookers could not believe their own eyes.

The silence was broken by a wild war-cry of triumph.

It came from the lips of the Red Buffalo, and his face was aglow with admiration and delight at the wonderful feat.

For once the stolid nature of the red-skin was broken through, and he had expressed his pent-up feelings with a yell of commingled joy and triumph in the scout's act, for he had been a close witness of all that had occurred, and as Buffalo Bill later discovered, a listener, for he spoke and understood English fairly well.

"I believe you have killed him, Cody," remarked Captain Benson.

"No; brutes are harder to kill than a human being," was the cool but rather embittered response of the scout.

Bending over the prostrate form, Reuben Benson said:

"He breathes all right, but the blow and fall both stunned and knocked the breath out of him."

"I hope none of his bones are broken."

"I think not, for he is a massively built fellow."

"Get some water at the spring and bathe his face," said Buffalo Bill.

"And let me urge, Cody, that you go on your way, for he is a terror when aroused."

"No, Captain Benson, I have not found him so terrible, and this is my camp, which I shall not leave until it suits me to do so," was the firm reply of Buffalo Bill, and that he had won the crowd there was no doubt, for they cheered his resolve.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BUFFALO BILL'S REFUSAL.

"I was speaking only to save trouble, Mr. Cody. I did not intend to allow

Doyle to carry out his threat against the redskin, though I hate every drop of blood in the veins of his people, for I have suffered cruelly at their hands; but I did not wish to interfere between man and man unless forced to do so."

"I cannot leave here with Doyle in this condition, while you can."

So said Captain Benson to Buffalo Bill; but the latter replied:

"And I have the Indian to look after, and that grave to fill in, for there are four redskin bodies in it now."

"Then, too, I have a purpose in remaining here, and no fear of your man Doyle can drive me out of my camp."

"I guess you are right; but, see, he is coming to."

One of the men had gotten water from the spring and bathed the face of Hercules Dan, who was slowly reviving.

His face was cut over the eye, and already swollen from the scout's blow, and he breathed hard and labored as he came to, while his lips were red where his teeth had cut them in his fall.

With an effort he asked:

"What was it, boys?"

"He worsted you, Dan, that was all."

"Who?"

"Buffalo Bill."

"Didn't a mule kick me?"

"No."

"Didn't I fall out of a tree? Or, what was it?"

"Buffalo Bill hit you, and then gave you a tumble that made your bones rattle like a bull in a china shop."

"Yes, Dan, he's slight in build, but oh my! my!"

"He's a giant from heel to scalp."

"You were like a baby in his grasp, Dan."

"He just planted you one in the face—and you should see how you look."

"And then he tossed you up a few hundred feet, inter ther atmosphere, an' let yer drap! No wonder yer thought yer hed tumbled out of a tree."

"An' a Government mule kicked yer."

"Yes, and you didn't scalp the Injun, Dan."

"Yer didn't even strike ther Injun's trail, Hercules."

While these encouraging and consoling remarks were being made, Hercules Dan lay perfectly quiet upon his back.

He was learning the truth and he had time to think, to get over his anger, and not make a fool of himself again.

"Silence, pards! Don't worry him, for he can't feel very good."

"Let me see if any bones are broken, Dan," said Reuben Benson.

"I guess they are all busted, from the way I feel, Cap'n."

"Not so bad as that, Dan, I hope."

"My lower teeth have been driven up into my jaw, my upper teeth downward; my skull is cracked, and I feel as if I was a bag full of loose bones."

All laughed, even Buffalo Bill smiling at the queer conceit, the utter wreck he had made of Hercules.

Nothing abashed, however, Hercules Dan asked:

"Did you see it, Cap'n Reub?"

"Yes."

"What did you see?"

"That you wasn't in it a little bit, Dan, quick, clever, and powerful as you are."

"Come, acknowledge you were wrong, and let us have no more trouble."

All saw the malignant look that swept over the bruised face, and knew that it boded evil to the scout; but Hercules Dan did not answer in keeping with what his looks revealed, for he said:

"All right, cap'n; I knows when I'm whipped, and I'll be friends with Buffalo Bill, and won't kill his dear Injun."

Buffalo Bill's face flushed, for he had read the look of the bully, and heard the words, but read between them.

So he stepped forward and replied quickly:

"I am no hypocrite, Doyle, and say just what I mean. I am perfectly willing to let this quarrel end right here, but we will not be friends, for no man shall

call me pard who would do the act you tried to do."

"Let the matter drop just as it is."

Hercules Dan bit his lips, while the others looked serious.

In their hearts they deemed the scout right, but they feared more trouble.

At last Doyle said: "Will you not shake hands?"

"No; for that means friendship, and I will grasp no man's hand treacherously," and Buffalo Bill turned to Reuben Benson and said:

"Captain, though I would protect a wounded Indian, I would not shield them on the warpath and able to defend themselves. These raiders should be punished, and though on foot they are armed and outnumber your force two to one."

"Those horses are comparatively fresh, while the ones you are riding are broken down. All but the Indian ponies belong to your settlement, you know; so take them and go in pursuit, for you can readily follow the trail, and, in fact, see them miles ahead."

"I will do so; but you, Mr. Cody?"

"I will remain in my camp here until you return."

"But I fear that Hercules Dan cannot go."

"Leave him, then, for I will see that he is cared for and gets into no mischief," was the smiling but significant assurance.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A MYSTERIOUS SHOT.

Captain Benson having decided to follow Buffalo Bill's advice, the tired horses ridden there were unsaddled and staked out, and the others prepared for the pursuit of the Indians.

Dinner was ordered cooked, and it was determined to press rapidly on and strike a severe blow if the redskin raiders could be overtaken before they reached shelter in the mountains, and this Buffalo Bill said could be done.

Hercules Dan had been aided to his feet, and he shook himself together, and declared no bones were broken, but he felt sore, though able to push on also, for he did not appear to relish remaining behind with the scout.

The latter produced his arnica and some plaster and gave them to the captain to dress the cut on the face of the Hercules.

This done, Captain Benson walked over to where Buffalo Bill was filling in the grave, keeping his eye, however, upon his enemy the while.

"I see that you are keeping an eye on Doyle?"

"Yes, and I shall drop him in his tracks with my rifle if he attempts to shoot, or to go near that Indian."

"I think he knows that, and he'll not attempt any nonsense, for the boys would not stand it, now."

"But I came to say that several of those horses do not belong in our settlement, so you are to keep them, and also the ponies, for we are lucky in getting back the animals we do, and also the booty the reds had to leave behind."

"Tell me how it all came about."

In his modest way Buffalo Bill told of his affair in Grizzly Gulch, his capture by the five outlaws, his being left in the timber tied to a tree, the appearance of the ghostly forms, and their maddened flight after the Wandering Jew, with his escape and trouble with the Indians, ending his story by asking:

"Now tell me if you ever heard of this Wandering Jew?"

Without answering directly, Benson, who held the post of magistrate in Silver Mound settlement, and was also captain of the rangers, said:

"You are a wonderful man, Buffalo Bill. I know of no one else who could have done what you have."

"You are modest in telling about yourself, but I feel sure that you deserve more credit than you have given yourself credit for."

"No, I told all as it happened; but, what about this Wandering Jew?"

"Yes, I have not only heard of him, but seen him."

"And he really is a Jew?"

"Most certainly, and has the accent; but is, all the same, a fearless fellow—nervy as Navajo."

"He held up the coach into Silver Mound settlement, in which I was a passenger, with five others, and did it alone; but he did not rob it; his object was to find some one he was looking for."

"Was there a grave anywhere near where he held you up?"

"Now I think of it, there were a number, for he stood just where we had buried half a dozen poor fellows who had been killed by Indians, one being my brother, and let me tell you that my old father and mother shared the same sad fate at their hands."

"You have indeed cause for bitterness against them."

"But can you tell me anything more of this Wandering Jew?"

"No more than I have heard of him holding up another coach, but without robbery."

"Thank you. Please do not speak about my being on his trail to any one."

"I will not; but dinner is ready and I must be off."

A quarter of an hour after the party rode away on fresh horses. Hercules Dan mounted with some difficulty.

The scout watched them ride away, and then turned to go in search of the trail of the Wandering Jew, when the Indian called out in fair English:

"Paehaska great chief, so much heap strong like mountain lion."

"Him play with big paleface like papoose; him save Red Buffalo from being kill, from losing scalplock."

"Red Buffalo Paehaska's brother—him big chief some time, bimeby, maybe so."

He held out his hand, which the scout grasped, just as there came a sharp report and a bullet clipped the flesh of Buffalo Bill's thumb, and carried off a finger of the Red Buffalo's extended hand!

CHAPTER XXIX.

AN UNKNOWN FOE.

That the Red Buffalo could understand and speak English was a surprise to Buffalo Bill, and he knew that the wounded redskin had consequently heard all that had been said between Hercules Dan and himself.

When the Indian had offered his hand in friendship, the scout was only too glad to take it, and yet, at the moment the two clasped hands, there came that wholly unexpected shot from somewhere in the timber.

The bullet had merely cut the flesh of the scout's hand, but a glance showed to him that it had severed the first two joints of the middle finger of the Indian's right hand, the piece dropping upon the ground, while the blood spurted from the wound.

With a bound Buffalo Bill was at the tree against which his rifle leaned, and away in pursuit, for he had caught sight of a blanket-enveloped form flying off among the timber, which on that side grew quite thick.

But, suddenly, the thought flashed upon him that if he went in pursuit of the unknown foe, the Indian would doubtlessly bleed to death; so, halting, he threw his rifle to his shoulder and took a chance shot at the flying form.

The fugitive sprang into the air at the shot, staggered a few steps, and went down in a clump of brush.

"That was certainly a crack shot at long range," muttered the scout, and, unheeding the fallen man, he returned to his redskin prisoner.

The finger was bleeding freely, but the scout quickly tied a buckskin string about the wrist, and getting his little leather medicine case, proceeded to dress the wound as best he could.

The ragged edges were clipped off, the bleeding checked, and the broken bone taken out at the joint, with a rough skill in surgery which experience had taught.

"Paehaska big medicine man!" said Red Buffalo, coolly watching the work, and without a wince of pain.

So far as he was concerned the finger did not appear to be off his hand for all the sign he exhibited that he suffered.

"You're a dandy to stand pain," observed Buffalo Bill, admiringly.

"Red Buffalo no squaw."

"But, Paehaska hurt, too."

"That is but a scratch," replied the scout, glancing at the slight wound on his own hand, and, saturating a bandage with arnica, he proceeded to bind it up.

"Who shoot?"

"I don't know; but he looked like an Indian, for I saw only his blanket."

"No Indian!"

"You think so?"

"Yes, Red Buffalo see face."

"Ah!"

"He paleface. Paehaska find out pretty quick bimeby."

"Yes, I'll go and take a look at him."

"Big shot Paehaska make; heap good!"

"Yes, it wasn't bad," and Buffalo Bill walked off through the timber, loading his rifle as he went along.

"I'm in the graveyard business this day, that is certain; but now, to find out who it was that fired that shot."

"If it is not an Indian, as Red Buffalo says, it must be one of those outlaws, or the Wandering Jew."

"In the latter case he is hunting me; but I will soon know."

"His shot was at very long range, so he has a good rifle, and it came very near being fatal to the Indian or myself."

"Let me see; he fell just yonder, where those rushes are, and when I fired I was dodging like a squirrel among the trees."

The scout reached the bushes, glanced about him, but saw no dead body; nor did he see a live man. No one was there!

He quickly looked all about, but without avail.

Not a person was discovered.

He looked at the spot where he was sure the man had gone down.

There was the trace of some one having fallen there, and where a form had crawled along for fifty feet upon the ground.

Then there were tracks, tracks that were made with a booted foot!

The Red Buffalo was right; the man was no Indian.

There was no trace of blood to show that he had even been wounded.

"I may not have hit him, and it was a clever trick of his to fall."

"Had I pushed right on after him, he might have brought me to a halt with a shot."

"I guess it was lucky for me the Indian's finger was shot off."

The nature of the ground beyond was such that trails could be seen, the timber running in a narrow strip down toward a bit of lowland.

Returning to the Indian, Buffalo Bill said:

"You are right, Red Buffalo; he was a white man."

"Where he?"

"Gone."

"No there?"

"No; it was a dodge he played on me to fall."

"Don't know him?"

"No, but he wore boots."

"Maybe catch him bimeby."

"I hope so, for I would like to know who the gentleman is."

CHAPTER XXX.

TRUSTING A REDSKIN.

William Cody, Chief of Scouts at Fort Platte, was in a quandary.

He felt his situation fully, and regarding himself in the position of the man

who, to use a slang expression, had "bitten off more than he could chew."

He had an Indian prisoner on his hands who was suffering from two wounds.

Then he had not found the unknown foe who had fired upon them, giving him a slight wound, and he must expect that another shot would come from some unexpected source.

The Wandering Jew had gone off with six prisoners at his heels, and both he and the prisoners he wished to find out about.

There were no less than seven Indian ponies and two good horses besides Paleface to be claimed by him as his property, for so Captain Benson had decided.

These were to be looked after.

He was keeping camp for the return of the Rangers from Silver Mount City, and he was anxious to go on the trail of those who had fled from the timber, and then get on to the fort with his prisoner and the horses.

If he left Red Buffalo untied in camp he felt very sure that he would escape, and he could not blame him for it, and he very likely would take the best horse in the lot to go on.

That he was suffering from two wounds Buffalo Bill knew would not deter the Indian from going.

He was well aware what Indian human nature, pluck, and endurance could stand.

If he bound the redskin it would but inflame his wounds, and show that he did not trust him.

"I'll risk the trust, and more, I'll leave him a gun, for if that white bully, Hercules Dan, comes back while I am away he can protect himself from him, for that he'd shoot the redskin I am morally certain."

So saying, Buffalo Bill went over to where the Indian lay and said:

"Is the Red Buffalo my white brother?"

"Heap so."

"Will the Red Buffalo speak with a straight tongue?"

"Yes, me talk heap straight."

"Then listen to me."

"Me hear."

"I wish to go on the trail of the foe who wounded you and me."

"Me hear."

"I may be gone one long walk; maybe two long walks, and I wish to leave my red brother here in camp and not tie him."

"I wish to trust the Red Buffalo and feel that his togue is not crooked."

"Me talk straight."

"The Red Buffalo is my prisoner, and I wish him to go to the paleface fort with me."

"Paleface brave kill me."

"No, I promise you they will not; but I have there a white brother, a big medicine chief, who will make the hurts of the Red Buffalo well."

"When he is well Paehaska will give him pony and food, and let him go back to his people and tell how the palefaces treated him."

"Will the Red Buffalo wait here in camp for Paehaska to come back?"

"The Red Buffalo will wait here. His tongue is not crooked," was the dignified reply.

"I believe my red brother."

"Here, this is Paehaska's little gun, and if the bad paleface comes back while I am gone, and tries to kill my red brother, he can defend himself; but he must not shoot him, or show the little gun unless the big white brave attacks him," and Buffalo Bill handed the Indian one of his revolvers.

The redskin's face lighted up with pleasure, and he said quietly:

"Me hear, me know. Red Buffalo do what his white brother says."

"I believe that you will," answered Buffalo Bill, and he walked over to where his horse, Paleface, was feeding, and mounting him, rode away through the timber.

He came to the spot where he had

seen the tracks of his unknown foe, and following them for a while, saw other trails.

There was one of a moccasined foot, and he muttered:

"The Wandering Jew's track, for he is said to wear moccasins."

Other tracks were there; and half a mile from camp, where the ground was soft, he counted the footprints of the six men who had intended burying him alive, but had gone off in pursuit of the Wandering Jew.

The latter's tracks were also there, as were the later and fresh trail of his unknown foe.

"Thus far they were all on foot, and from their tracks all of them were on the mighty jump when they passed along here," said the scout.

Soon after he came to a thicket in a bit of lowland, and here were traces of where six horses had been hitched close together.

Apart from these there were the tracks of a seventh horse, and the freshness of the latter trail told Buffalo Bill that the last one found was that of the man who had wounded him and the Indian.

But there was no other trail to reveal that the Wandering Jew had been mounted.

The tracks all led across the lowland and over a rise that was timbered with small trees.

"I will still follow the trails," muttered the scout, and he continued on his way.

CHAPTER XXXI.

BETRAYED BY A TRACK.

Following the trails up over the rise, Buffalo Bill continued on until he came out of the belt of timber.

The fresher of the tracks he saw followed on after those made during the night by his captors.

But suddenly he halted, for he came upon a trail coming in on his right!

It was of one horse, and fresh. And more, it was made by the same animal, as the tracks showed, that must have been ridden by his unknown foe.

"Here is where he came in on his way to the timber, but he continued on, I see, not returning on his own trail further than here.

"Ah! There is something."

He had seen some tracks ahead.

Going to them he saw that they were of the six horses he had been following, but where they had returned thus far, and halted awhile.

Looking back over his way he saw the timber where his camp was, and the plains beyond.

"Ah! Now I know why they did not return after me.

"They got this far and evidently saw Captain Benson and his men.

"Yes, there is where they branched off, and at a quick pace, too, supposing I would send the horsemen in pursuit.

"But the trail of my unknown foe goes on from here, I see.

"Yet I discover no trace of the Wandering Jew, or that he had a horse.

"I might as well go back now, I guess, as it will be sunset by the time I reach camp—no, I'll just see who that gentleman is."

A horseman had suddenly ridden into sight a short distance off.

That he had not seen the scout his manner showed; but he quickly discovered him, came to a sudden halt, then rode on.

"It is a man I saw in Grizzly Gulch at the funeral of the Gentleman Vagabond. I wonder if he can be my unknown foe. I'll go slow and see what he has to say."

As the man drew nearer, Buffalo Bill called out:

"Ho, pard, we meet again, for I saw you in Grizzly Gulch, I remember."

"Yes, and you are Buffalo Bill, the scout," answered the other, who was a man of striking appearance, well dressed,

mounted on a fine horse and thoroughly armed.

"I am Buffalo Bill, pard, if so you will, and I was following a trail of an Indian who shot at me from ambush and skipped. But I'll give it up and return to camp. Won't you go, too?"

"I don't mind, thank you; in fact, I'll be glad to do so, for I'm tired, as I've been out prospecting for gold all day."

"Didn't see any redskins, did you?"

"Not a soul."

They were now riding side by side back toward camp, and Buffalo Bill asked:

"What may I call you, pard, for my own name is Cody, as you may know."

"Yes, I'd forgotten to tell you my name."

"I will give you the one by which I am known in Grizzly Gulch, for there they call me Nugget Ned, from the fact that in my prospecting I have found some good-sized nuggets of the yellow metal at different times."

"You are lucky," and Buffalo Bill had been taking his companion in from head to foot in his quiet way, though not appearing to do so.

The sun was about on the horizon when the two came to the lowland where the tracks were most plainly visible.

It was there, too, that Buffalo Bill had seen the tracks of the Wandering Jew, as he supposed it to be, from the fact that the man wore moccasins.

The scout's eyes had been upon the ground, and at a piece of rugged road he drew back and allowed the man who had called himself Nugget Ned to go in advance.

Hardly had the latter done so when Buffalo Bill quickly drew his revolver and said: "Pard, see here!"

The man looked back to find himself covered.

He started, turned white, and uttered a sound between an exclamation and a curse.

"Raise your hands, pard, for my gun covers you."

"What do you mean?" cried the man with angry look and tone.

"Obey, and then we will talk."

"I will not! I—"

"Up with your hands, sir, or I will kill you," thundered the scout, and quickly the man obeyed, while he asked:

"Is this a joke?"

"It may be, but I don't see it," and, riding close up to the horseman, he took from him his revolvers, knife, and rifle.

Then he slipped his lariat over his head, and by a few turns made him fast to the saddle.

"Oh, but you shall pay for this, Buffalo Bill!"

"I will hold myself responsible to you if I am wrong, Nugget Ned; but I believe you to be the man who shot to kill me a couple of hours ago, wounding an Indian and myself, and I base my charge upon the tracks of your horse, which a blind man can see made those right there, but going in the other direction."

"It is false!" cried the man.

"The tracks betray you," was the calm rejoinder, "and I will prove it to my own satisfaction."

CHAPTER XXXII.

A FOILED ASSASSIN.

It was just sunset when a party of horsemen, drawn out in a long, straggling line, came toward the timber in which the wounded Indian was holding the camp.

What were his thoughts no one could tell, for his face revealed nothing.

But he saw his old enemy, Hercules Dan, among them, and more, he beheld that two of the horses carried burdens that he knew were men, dead men, while others appeared to be wounded.

They had overtaken the Indians, that was certain, and whatever harm they had inflicted upon them they had not returned unscathed from the encounter.

Up to the camp rode Captain Reuben Benson, and not seeing the Chief of Scouts he addressed himself to the Indian, asking in English:

"Where is Buffalo Bill?"

But the Red Buffalo was not giving the fact away that he could speak English, and simply said:

"How."

It was the Indian salutation, and, calling to one of the men who could speak the redskin's language, Captain Benson told him to ask where the scout was.

"Paehaska has gone on trail. An enemy shot at him and slightly wounded the white chief," and the Red Buffalo showed his wound also.

But the Indian could tell no more than that the scout would be back soon.

"Well, there has been trouble here, too, pards," said Captain Benson, and he told the interpreter to tell the redskin that they had seen his people retreating, and had pursued them over a rise, where they had overhauled them, killing two of the rangers, a couple of horses also, and wounding slightly several of the men.

They had also killed several redskins, but the band had scattered and escaped them by flying over water-washed ground, where the horses could not follow, and so they had returned.

Captain Benson also told the Indian, through the interpreter, that he had better wrap himself in his blanket and lay quiet, as the men were very bitter because of their comrade's loss.

The Red Buffalo's answer was characteristic of a brave man, for he said, with dignity, that he was a subchief, and would not hide for fear of death; that he was a prisoner of the great white chief Paehaska, and if he was killed he did not fear death, for he would be avenged.

Paehaska was the foe of his people, but he would not see a prisoner harmed, and if he had to die he was ready.

Captain Benson and the interpreter both admired the redskin's pluck, but feared trouble when Hercules Dan and the others came up.

It was not very long before the others did arrive, and their faces showed that they were in a revengeful mood.

They entered the timber at a point some distance from the Red Buffalo, who sat on his blanket, watchful and waiting.

Hercules Dan had gotten an arrow wound in his shoulder, and though slight, it made him very mad.

He also had not recovered from the blow and fall given him by Buffalo Bill and the long ride and defeat had added to his ugly temper and he was just ready for trouble.

Staking his horse out, he went to the campfire, where those who had arrived first were preparing supper, and it was not long before he learned that the scout had been fired upon by some unknown foe, and the Indian's finger had been shot off.

"Where is the redskin?" he growled.

"Asleep in his blanket," said one.

Hercules Dan's eyes glittered malignantly.

The scout was gone, the Indian was at his mercy!

He would not shoot him, but would knife him quietly, and if he didn't wake up, why it would be supposed he died, bled to death from his wounds.

In a little while Hercules Dan strolled away from the campfire toward the horses.

But he made a flank movement and was soon nearing the spot where the Indian lay on his blanket.

It was dark now, the moon was just rising, and away from the campfire all was gloom.

But Hercules Dan quietly took out his knife, felt its point and edge, and started to find his supposed helpless prey.

He approached without realizing that the full moon, just soaring above the horizon, was directly at his back, while the redskin lay in shadow.

Nearer and nearer Hercules Dan crept, and when within fifteen feet of his intended victim, he stopped to make out just where he was.

As he held his knife in hand, and the rising moon penetrated the shadows, he suddenly beheld a revolver leveled at him, an eye glancing along the barrel.

The hand that held the revolver was as firm as steel, and the shock of the discovery caused the would-be murderer to let his knife drop from his hand.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

TROUBLE IN CAMP.

"The redskin is more merciful than you are, Hercules Dan.

"You can put down your gun, Red Buffalo, for I have him covered now."

The voice was that of Buffalo Bill.

It came from back in the shadow, behind the place where the redskin lay.

The Indian at once lowered his "gun," for so all firearms are called in the Wild West, and Buffalo Bill stepped into view.

"Hands up, Hercules Dan!"

"What for?"

"Obey me, for I'll stand no trifling with such a coward—by such a brute as you are."

The man raised his hands above his head, and, stepping forward, Buffalo Bill took his belt of arms from about his waist and picked up his knife from where it had fallen.

"Now, march for yonder campfire, and remember I am close on your heels and with a revolver muzzle at your back."

"Don't disgrace me before my pards, Buffalo Bill," whined the man.

"Nothing could disgrace you; you cannot get lower than you are."

"I shall show you no mercy, for I'd be knifed the moment you got the chance to stab me in the back."

"March!" The man did not move.

"Shall I encourage you with a prick of the point of your knife?"

The man started off briskly.

Then the men gathered about the campfire looked up to see a surprising sight.

Hercules Dan advanced with his hands above his head, and the scout was close upon his heels with a revolver covering him.

"What does this mean?" angrily cried several voices.

"It means, pards, that this scout is imposing on me because he has the power," said Hercules Dan.

"Captain Benson, the man lies, for we are man to man, as far as the imposing upon him goes."

"The truth is, I came back to camp a few minutes ago with a prisoner, and was staking my horses out when I saw this human wolf skulking around toward where the wounded Indian lies."

"I got there before him, and he was creeping upon the redskin, knife in hand, when he was halted."

"The Indian had a revolver, mine, for I had left it with him upon leaving camp, and thus held this cowardly assassin up."

"Had he killed him it would have been all right under the circumstances; but he did not, and then I came forward and marched him into camp here. I claim him as my prisoner as long as he remains where I am, for I do not care to have to kill him."

"Well, yer can't claim him, that's all," and one of the men sprang to his feet.

"I was addressing your captain, not you; but as you have chipped in I'll repeat that I caught this man playing the part of an assassin. This is my camp, and I shall either hold him a prisoner or drive him out of it, and I warn him that there are foes on the watch now not far away."

"Boys, do you intend to let this scout run this camp, and rope in one of our pards as a prisoner, all to protect a cursed Injun?" called out the man who had before interfered.

"No!"

"He can't do it!"

"It shan't be done!"

"Boys, we must back up our pard!"

Such were the utterances of the men, though all did not speak.

Nor had Captain Reuben Benson yet made reply to what the scout had said to him.

Emboldened by the support of some of his companions, Hercules had lowered his arms, but only for an instant, as up they went again at the ringing command of Buffalo Bill:

"Up with your arms, Hercules Dan, or, by heaven above, I'll send a bullet through you!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

BUFFALO BILL'S BOLD STAND.

It was a critical moment there in the little camp in the timber.

The moon beamed down serenely now upon the men and their faces, moved by the feelings that swept over them.

The fire revealed all distinctly.

The cooks preparing supper paused in their work to take part either for or against the daring scout, who in the discharge of what he deemed duty would be turned aside by no man or men.

Hercules Dan stood there with hands upraised, trembling with rage and fear, livid and waiting.

And Buffalo Bill now had a revolver in each hand.

Those whom he had supposed would aid him against lawlessness were now opposed to him at least four of the group of now nine men had so declared themselves, siding with Hercules Dan, making five.

Captain Benson thus far had said nothing. He was a quiet man, slow to move, and did not fly off the handle, so to speak.

There were three men there who awaited his decision as to whether Buffalo Bill should hold Hercules Ned as a prisoner.

So it was about the camp-fire, while out in the partial shadow no one noticed that there was an onlooker upon the scene.

It was the Red Buffalo, and he had hopped on one foot to a place near, and had the scout's revolver in hand and ready.

There was no doubt as to who he would take sides with.

"Boys, does this scout run this camp, or do we—one against nine of us now?" cried Hercules Dan.

"We run it," cried the first man who had sided with the big bully.

"Hold on there, for I have a word to say," called out Buffalo Bill, and they gave him attention.

"Do not in your desire to protect a criminal forget that you are doing so against an officer of the law, for I wear the shield of a United States Marshal, and my duty is to put down the lawless clan."

"You may kill me, yes, for you are big odds against me, but you shall never rescue this man, for at the first hostile movement I shall send a bullet through his coward heart, and I advise you to shoot quick, or I'll send some of the rest of you on the same road he takes."

"Now, you know just what the situation is, so start the ball whenever you please, for I am ready."

It was a magnificent picture, that one man standing at bay before many, and so thought even those who opposed him.

But it changed from the sublime to the ridiculous in the twinkling of an eye, as, having heard what Buffalo Bill had threatened, the "bone of contention" yelled out pleadingly:

"For God's sake, boys, don't move or he'll shoot me—I know him!"

A laugh broke forth at the eagerly-uttered words of Hercules Dan, and then Captain Benson spoke:

"Let this stop right here, men!"

"Mr. Cody is right, if Hercules Dan did as he says, and we cannot doubt him."

As an officer of the law he has the right to arrest him, and we can but support, not oppose him.

"Then, men, you forget that the scout recaptured our horses for us, the booty the Indians took, and has already done much to avenge us, so we must be with, not against, him. What is your will, Scout Cody?"

"I intend to secure this man, to prevent more trouble while he is in this camp—no, I will make him safe," and in a second Buffalo Bill had grasped the arms of Hercules Dan, drew them behind his back, and slipped upon the wrists with a snap a pair of small steel handcuffs.

"I have to go prepared, sir," he explained to Captain Benson, and then added:

"Now he's safe, and at liberty to move about, only I warn him if he causes more trouble I shall hold him a prisoner and carry him to Fort Platte with me—ah, Red Buffalo, you there?" and the scout's eyes fell upon the Indian hopping back to his blanket bed.

He made no reply, but all knew why he had come, and men cast strange looks at each other.

Again turning to Reuben Benson, Buffalo Bill said:

"Now, captain, let me tell you that while you were away I was fired upon by a man who wounded me slightly and cut a finger off for the redskin."

"I pursued and met him, but assured of my man by the tracks of his horse and his own bootprints, I made him a prisoner, and he is yonder, tied to his saddle and his horse staked out, but upon my return to camp I saw far across the plain a body of Indian horsemen coming this way."

"They are some fifty in number, have evidently met their comrades retreating on foot, and are lying in wait to attack us to-night, not supposing that they have been discovered."

"Ah! this is news, and we must prepare for them; but we follow your lead, Mr. Cody," said Captain Benson, earnestly.

CHAPTER XXXV.

IN IRONS.

The men quickly acquiesced in the words of their captain, that they were willing to follow Buffalo Bill's lead.

Several of them had not had experience in fighting redskins, and others that had realized that it was no child's play.

The news of the scout, that the retreating redskins on foot had met a force of their own comrades, and would return to strike a blow for their revenge, naturally believing the whites would not expect to be attacked, quite excited the little band under Captain Benson, and all were eager that Buffalo Bill should lead them out of their danger.

"I wish you had been with us this afternoon, Mr. Cody, for you know Indians so well we would not have been led into a trap by them," said Captain Benson, and he told the story of their being ambushed.

"Your mistake was in not having a scout locate the Indians beyond the rise, and still making a pretense of pursuing them so as to scatter them completely," said the scout. Then he added: "You are nine now, I believe."

"Eight without Hercules Dan."

"Count him also, for at the proper time I shall transfer those manacles from his hands to his feet, and he will have to fight; but I shall warn him that I shall stand no nonsense."

"Nor shall I, Mr. Cody," assured Captain Benson. "The prisoner I have I will also manacle about the ankles, for, fortunately, I go prepared for just such as he, and he must also fight, as his life is at stake as well as ours."

"And we'll make the Injun fight, too," said the man who had taken the part of Hercules Dan against the scout.

Buffalo Bill turned upon him and said calmly:

"No, he shall not fight against his

own people and to prevent his rescue, even if he would be guilty of doing such a thing."

"You are right, Mr. Cody, perfectly right," said Captain Benson, and other Rangers agreed with him, while the Red Buffalo looked as though he had not heard a word.

Turning to the Indian Buffalo Bill said in his own language: "The Red Buffalo must be bound after he has had his supper, for there are foes here who would kill him, pretending he was trying to escape."

"If he is bound they will have no excuse."

"Paehaska has spoken. The Red Buffalo is his prisoner," was the quiet response, and he ate the supper one of the men placed before him.

Bringing up his white prisoner, whom he found tied in his saddle as he had left him, Buffalo Bill asked:

"Do any of you know this man?"

"I have seen him in Grizzly Gulch, but do not know him," one of the men answered.

"I know him. He is a gold hunter known as Nugget Ned, and is an all around man-killer," Captain Benson remarked, adding:

"I said I knew him, but not other than what I have heard of him, and what was said was never in his favor."

"All right; he is a prisoner, and I make a serious charge against him—ah! what is it, Red Buffalo?" and Buffalo Bill turned to the Indian, who had called out to him somewhat excitedly.

In his own tongue the Red Buffalo said: "I told Paehaska I saw the face of the man who fired upon us. I said it was no Indian, but a paleface with a blanket like blood."

"That is the face the Red Buffalo saw," and the redskin drew his hand over his face to indicate that the man he saw had a long beard.

So had the prisoner. "And he has a red blanket, or one like blood, as the Indian puts it, rolled up behind his saddle; and, man, his boot-tracks fit those of the man who fired upon us, one of the heels having a half-broken horseshoe upon it, as he has."

"There is no doubt in my mind that this is the man."

"Gentlemen, I appeal to you that there is a mistake. I am an honest gold hunter. This man held me up and made me his prisoner."

"I am from Grizzly Gulch, and I happen to know that this scout was nearly lynched there for murdering and robbing a poor vagabond whom he suspected of having gold. I ask you to set me free," and the prisoner turned toward the Rangers.

But Captain Benson quickly spoke up: "We know this scout and his record, and that he is a Government officer, and I happen to know something of you."

"Of his arrest in Grizzly Gulch he has told us, and he accuses you of firing on him in camp to-day, and has arrested you, so you are his prisoner and must take the consequences."

The man said no more, and Buffalo Bill slipped a pair of manacles upon his ankles, and then did the same office for Red Buffalo, which caused Hercules Dan to mutter:

"Yer'll all have 'em on by morning, if you give him rope."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

TO FIGHT FOR LIFE.

Buffalo Bill laughed at the words of Hercules Dan, which he overheard, and sat down to eat his supper with Captain Benson, after which a plan of action for defending the camp was entered upon.

"The Indians I saw numbered at least fifty horsemen, and they could not have come by that trail without meeting those who were retreating on foot."

"They were a long way off, but my glass revealed the number, and if they did meet their comrades you may be cer-

tain, Captain Benson, that they took them up behind them."

This would add all of twenty to their number, so we will have about seventy to fight."

"And we, Mr. Cody, are but eleven."

"Yes, but I have fought greater odds often and won the fight."

"How far were they off?"

"All of fifteen miles, and it has been nearly two hours since I saw them."

"They have seen the camp fire, know we are here, and will send out scouts and prepare to attack at dawn, for they will not fight at night unless compelled to do so."

"What I desire is to have the camp appear as though not suspecting danger, and we will drive the horses into a lariat corral among the trees when ready to retire."

"I will go out and reconnoitre, and then we will give the men their positions and await the attack."

"The prisoner, Nugget Ned, has a good long-range rifle, as I happen to know, and you have the weapons of your two comrades who were killed, so we will have thirteen rifles in the fight for our first volley, and our revolvers can do the rest."

"I will make a short scout now to see just where they are and what about."

With this, Buffalo Bill left the camp and began a reconnaissance, one and all the men now glad to have him for their leader in a fight that appeared to them to be a most desperate undertaking.

Even Hercules Dan remarked to his particular chum:

"I'm right glad now that I didn't get a chance to kill Buffalo Bill, for without him we'd just have been wiped out."

"If he lets me have my gun you bet I'll use it the best I can, and if we whips the redskins, why, I'll call it quits between us and shake hands; but I'm dead sore on that Injun yonder."

Buffalo Bill was gone for over half an hour, and slipped into camp so quietly no one knew he had come until he stood in their midst.

Then he said: "Captain Benson, I've got to gag the Indian, for he would betray to his comrades that we were aware of their coming and ready for them, and no one could blame him for it."

"He would warn them by a word or two, and that would spoil all—no, I'll do better, for he might still warn them if he suspected our intention."

"Knife him," growled the particular friend of Hercules Dan.

"No, I am not built that way; but I have some morphine in my little medicine case, and I'll drug his coffee, so, cook, give us a cup all round, for he has his eyes upon us."

The morphine was produced and some put in one cup of coffee, the man who was serving as cook taking it to the redskin prisoner, who readily drank it, for sometimes the white men can overmatch the Indian in cunning.

"Now, Captain Benson," said Buffalo Bill, as he sipped his tin cup of coffee, "I wish to tell you that I got pretty near the Indians."

"They are out upon the plain, while their ponies have been left far back to prevent making their presence known."

"They are all there, the ones who were retreating on foot having come back with them, and they can see our camp fire distinctly and forms moving about."

"They sent out a couple of scouts while I was watching them, and that made me come in."

"We must drive our horses into the timber, confining them with lariats, and the Indians will make attacks from two points, to stampede our animals as their main force charges the camp."

"By having the horses close up we will force them to attack in one direction, and that will be from the plain, not the timber."

"Now, we will sleep in a circle around our little camp, and we can form breast-works of the plunder, old logs, and our

saddles, and no man is to fire until I give the word."

"You take the watch until after midnight, and then I'll relieve you."

"The two prisoners have got to fight where I can see them, and the couple of extra guns you have I will keep near me."

"Now get your positions, men, and when I call you wake up for hot work."

Half an hour after the camp was in deep repose.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

WHAT BUFFALO BILL SAW.

The men laid down upon their blanket beds with a full and stern realization of what was before them.

They knew that it might be their last night of life; but they had confidence in Buffalo Bill, and accepted the alternative with the calmness of brave men, such as they were.

The hard breathing of the Red Buffalo soon told that he would not give them any trouble.

Nugget Ned did not appear to sleep, for he seemed to have much on his mind; but Hercules slept snoringly and well.

Captain Benson was on duty through the night until two o'clock, for he knew how very tired the scout must be and would not call him.

Buffalo Bill was awake the instant he heard his name in a low tone, and at once realized the hour, and that he had been allowed to sleep more than an hour over his time.

"You should have called me sooner. Take my blankets and turn in, for I will call you in good time. Heard or seen anything?"

"Nothing," and the tired captain turned in and was at once asleep.

Buffalo Bill observed that Red Buffalo was still under the influence of the morphine, and Hercules Dan was sleeping as though he, too, had imbibed a narcotic.

"The third prisoner, Nugget Ned, he found awake, and said:

"Can't sleep, eh, from fear they may surprise us?"

"What I do is none of your business, Buffalo Bill."

"What you have done is, however. Yes, and if you raise your voice again, so that those Indians may know we are on the watch, you will be the first man in this camp that dies."

"They may be your friends—probably are, if you are a renegade; but you will find that you cannot betray us."

The man appeared cowed by the scout's words, as though his intention had been discovered, and said:

"Whatever you may think me, I am not a renegade, Buffalo Bill."

"I may wrong you; but a man who is an assassin will do any act of crime; but I have warned you," and Buffalo Bill went the rounds of the camp.

He found the men all sleeping, the horses were all right, and all was as quiet as death, save the yelp of a coyote now and then that scented the two unburied bodies in the camp.

Then Buffalo Bill went to the edge of the timber and began to peer out over the plain.

The camp-fire had died down, so all was dark in the timber, but out on the plain all was light, for the moon rode in a cloudless sky.

The keen eyes of the scout searched the plain thoroughly, and rested upon a dark object a quarter of a mile away.

"There was no rock there I remember," he muttered, and he raised his field glass to his eyes. "Yes, there they are, and the captain did not notice them, as they are moving in a mass, and very slowly."

The object he gazed upon, by close watching, he saw was moving, but the movement was so slow it was only detected by the closest observation.

The Indians were grouped together, and step by step they came forward, intending to give the idea that they were a slight rise in the ground.

"They wish to get close up by dawn,

and then come with a rush. Their plan is all right, but it may miscarry. I will take another tour of the camp, and see if there are more coming through the timber, though I believe not. Then I will awaken the men and get ready to surprise those fellows."

With another glance at the moving mass on the plain, he returned to the camp and found all quiet there.

Nugget Ned was either asleep now or feigning to be.

Passing on into the timber beyond the immediate camp, Buffalo Bill saw several coyotes suddenly scamper away a hundred yards distant.

He had not frightened them, he knew, but who had?

"They are coming by way of the timber, after all. We will have to fight between two fires," he mused.

He then passed on further into the timber and took refuge behind a large tree.

Then he waited for a moment and then he saw a form coming noiselessly toward him.

Nearer it came, until the moonlight fell full upon the tall form and bearded face of one whom he knew must be none other than the Wandering Jew.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A STRANGE WARNING.

To say that Buffalo Bill was somewhat staggered as the moonlight, penetrating into the timber, revealed to him no less a personage than the mysterious man known as the Wandering Jew, would be to tell the truth.

Often had he heard of this strange man, who held up stage coaches, yet neither killed nor committed robbery, and the description of him had enabled him to recognize him when he had so unexpectedly appeared before him, and Judge Ghent and his jury, who held him, the scout, a prisoner, and were threatening him with a most appalling fate.

That the coming of the Wandering Jew just at that time had saved Buffalo Bill from the threatened fate he knew, yet he had not believed the appearance of the man was for that purpose.

As he now stood before him, it was proof that the pursuers in white who had darted away after him had neither captured him nor killed him; perhaps their shots had not even slightly wounded him.

Seeing that the man was walking straight toward the camp, Buffalo Bill stepped out from behind the tree he had sought the shelter of and confronted him, ready to meet him either as friend or foe.

The stranger halted, but revealed neither surprise nor fear.

There he stood, with the moonlight beaming full upon him, and Buffalo Bill regarded him with deepest interest.

He was clad in buckskin from head to foot, for he wore moccasins, leggins, the hunting shirt and cap, all of dressed deerskin.

Upon his back was a large pack, somewhat resembling a soldier's knapsack, only four times the size.

A blanket close rolled was upon top of the pack, also a roll of rubber cloth, and a rifle was slung to the pack.

What the pack contained Buffalo Bill could only guess at.

The man was all of six feet, his shoulders were broad, and he had come along with a stride that was firm yet noiseless.

He wore his hair long, and his beard fell to his belt, in which were stuck a pair of revolvers and a knife.

His face was a noble one, and unmistakably Jewish.

By a strange coincidence he had halted right among the graves before referred to back in the timber, and Buffalo Bill quickly recalled the fact that it was said whenever the Wandering Jew was seen it was there that a grave was found.

"Well, pard, which way?" asked Buffalo Bill in a low and undisturbed voice.

"I vas glad to see you, mine frient, for I vas going to te camps to tell te beoples dere vas red mans coming to attack dem when te taylight vas come."

The voice was rich and full, but the accent was decidedly Jewish, and funny in spite of the words he uttered, so full of importance.

"Ah! you were going to warn us, eh?"

"I vas."

"Where are the Indians?"

"Out upon the plains, creeping up close now."

"How many of them?"

"Dere vas seventy-two red mans dere, and a couple of hundred more vas coming quick."

"This is news, indeed; but where are these two hundred more?"

"Coming from te mountains, mine frient."

"And how do you know this?"

"I vas see mit my eyes."

"May I ask if you are not one they call the Wandering Jew?"

"Yes, I vas so calt."

"And who are you, my friend?"

"The Wandering Jew," came the answer, with all the innocence in the world.

Buffalo Bill looked at the man fixedly, but detected no sign of having intentionally parried his question.

Then he would not press the matter as regarded the name, so said:

"And what prompted you to come and give us this warning of danger?"

"I vas a white man; I vas humans, and I don't want to see red mans kill my peoples, mine frient, so I vas come to tell you, for I think maybe you vas have some soldier mans near to help you."

"No, we are alone."

"I vas sorry."

"How far off are the other Indians you speak of?"

"Some miles away, but wind blow dat vay, dey hear goons shooting, and come pretty quick."

"Then our best plan would be to quietly retreat from here, only I felt they would have scouts around us."

"Dey vas have, for I vas see dem."

"You must fight dem back, and maybe help come to keep te others off?"

"Will you help us?"

"I vill help you, mine frient," was the low reply of the Wandering Jew.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE AWAKENING.

The scout was in a quandary.

He had no reason to doubt the information given him by the strange man, who had voluntarily sought their camp, for he knew himself that seventy of the Indians were then creeping up slowly to the attack, and the party of redskin horsemen, the retreating force led to strike a blow of revenge, might be followed by others not very far behind them.

In that case the little band of whites would have to make a desperate fight of it for life against overwhelming numbers, and with the chances terribly against them.

That the firing must be heard by some miners or prospectors, and help be brought from the fort at Grizzly Gulch, Buffalo Bill hoped would be the case; but he trusted that he could beat off the first attack and then retreat.

To retreat then would but bring on discovery, and catch them away from the shelter of the river and the timber.

Quickly he conned over the situation, and was at least glad to have the aid of the Wandering Jew, though he was a man whom he had been sent away from Fort Platte to run down, to either capture or kill as a road agent.

"Well, pard, I thank you for your warning, and the news you bring, and will tell you frankly that I was already aware of the Indians out there upon the plains, and that they were creeping upon us to attack at dawn, which is now not very far off. But I did not know of still others, and a larger force, also coming against us, and we will try to meet them all as best we can, while I thank you for your aid."

"Now, if you will come with me, you

will see that we will be ready in a minute's time for a fight."

"It vill be taybreak in haf an hour," and the Wandering Jew took out a handsome gold watch and looked at the time, the act revealing that he wore a large solitaire diamond on the little finger of his left hand.

"Well, we have no time to lose; but did you see any Indians the way you came?"

"Only te scouts to give varning if you vas try to leave te camps."

"Good; we can use our whole force when they attack. Come on, pard!"

Buffalo Bill led the way to where Captain Benson was sleeping, and he arose at a touch on the arm.

"Captain Benson, here is a gentleman who just came into camp to warn us we were to be attacked by Indians, and to tell us that more are coming—quite a large force."

"We must beat off this first attack, and hunt them so they cannot follow, for we will have to retreat rapidly upon Grizzly Gulch, sending a man ahead for help."

"And more, Captain Benson—our good friend here says he will lend us his aid."

"All right, Mr. Cody, any friend of yours is more than welcome, and you place him where he'll do the most good," and, turning to the Wandering Jew, the Captain extended his hand and thanked him, the stranger uttering no word.

The men were then awakened; the Indian prisoner was seen to still be sleeping and unable to warn his comrades, and Buffalo Bill gave Nugget Ned a low warning, remarking:

"If your weapon goes off by accident before I give the order, it shall be your last shot, Nugget Ned."

The man bit his lips, but made no reply, and in five minutes the men were wide awake, silent, and determined.

They could all see the dark mass on the plains now, not three hundred yards from them, and knew that it was their foes.

The mass was still slowly moving toward the timber.

The dawn was near at hand now, and the eastern sky began to grow light; seeing which, the Indian man began to move more rapidly.

Upon one side of Buffalo Bill was Nugget Ned; upon the other, Hercules Dan, while the Wandering Jew stood alone some paces away, a tree for a shelter.

Nearer and nearer came the dark mass.

Brighter and brighter grew the eastern horizon.

Two hundred yards away the dark mass came to a halt.

But only for a moment; then it seemed to roll on again.

Fifty yards nearer, and then another halt.

It was the calm before the storm.

It was the gathering of the braves for their rush upon the camp they believed lost in slumber.

Another moment, and the dark mass would have sprung into action.

Nearly a hundred braves would have been rushing forward to kill, and as many throats would have been uttering hoarse war cries.

But, before the spring was made, in the very nick of time came the voice of Buffalo Bill to break the stillness, shouting in tones that went far across the plains:

"Fire!"

CHAPTER XL.

IN DOUBLE IRONS.

At the command of the scout, again twelve rifles flashed, the red glare from their muzzles momentarily paling the mingled moonlight and gray of dawn.

And twelve bullets did their fatal work, fired into that mass of red humanity.

The thunder tones of the scout, giving the order to fire was the first startling knowledge the Indians had that

they were not creeping upon sleeping foes, to kill, scalp, and get back the plunder and horses they had lost, along with revenge that would make their hearts glad.

They were stunned and crippled by the surprise and the fatal blow.

But there were two rifles that did not cease firing after the first volley.

They were the breech-loading weapon of Buffalo Bill and the repeating rifle of the Wandering Jew.

While they were rattling forth shots Captain Benson had seized and fired the two extra weapons of the two dead men brought into camp in the afternoon, and the rest of the Rangers were reloading for another volley.

And none too soon, for the Indians, hurled back by the first fire, were rallying for a rush.

But the rifles were reloaded, and both the Wandering Jew and Buffalo Bill had a revolver in each hand, so that the deadly music of the weapons began again, and in dismay the redskins rolled back from the fierce hail of bullets, dragging their wounded with them, but leaving their dead, a dozen in number, upon the field.

"A glorious victory, Mr. Cody!" cried Captain Benson with enthusiasm.

"So far, sir, good," was the cautious reply, and he added:

"And that rifle of our strange friend did wonders.

"But I will have to look at my redskin, for he must give no secrets away, and the Indians will think from the rapid firing and deadly result we have been reinforced.

"Were any of you hurt?"

"I am going to see now," and Captain Benson turned away, while Buffalo Bill walked over to where the Indian prisoner was.

There lay the Red Buffalo sleeping as calmly as before.

The sound of battle had not aroused him.

"I hope I did not give him too much," and Buffalo Bill laid his hand upon his heart, then felt his pulse.

"No; he'll come round all right," he muttered, and, walking over to where Hercules Dan was, he said:

"You fought well, Hercules, and I shall release you, but do not let me have more trouble with you on account of my redskin prisoner."

"You shall not, pard, and thank you.

"We gave the reds a dose that they will not soon forget, and you are the one that really did it."

Buffalo Bill made no reply, but freed Hercules Dan's ankle of the irons.

Then he walked over to Nuggett Ned and said:

"Hold out your hands, sir."

"What for?"

"These manacles."

"You took them off of that man to double iron me?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because I deem it best to do so."

"What have I done?"

Captain Benson had just come up, and watched the scout with interest, mingled with surprise.

He had seen him free Hercules Dan, and was glad that he had done so.

Now he saw him putting double irons upon Nuggett Ned.

"You have done nothing," replied Buffalo Bill, in answer to the question of his prisoner.

"Then I appeal to you, Captain Benson, to show why I should be treated as this man is now treating me."

"I suppose Mr. Cody has some reason for it. He certainly is not one to be prompted by malice, and knows what he is about," was the captain's reply, while Hercules Dan, as though anxious to curry favor with the scout by compliments, blurted out:

"You bet he does!"

"Captain Benson, I am putting double irons upon this man, as he was no earthly good in our fight!

"I had my eyes upon him, and he fired his first shot in the air, and, though he reloaded his rifle, he did not again fire it, but twice I looked toward him in the second of time to save my life, for he was simply planning to kill me, and let it be thought I fell by an Indian bullet.

"The man is a murdering renegade, and I shall see that he does no more damage, while we can do without his services," and Buffalo Bill clasped the double irons upon the man and secured him to a tree with a lariat. Just as Captain Benson stepped up to him and said in a low tone:

"Mr. Cody, I came to tell you that your stranger pard has left the camp."

CHAPTER XLI.

THE EXCHANGE OF RIFLES.

Buffalo Bill appeared as much surprised at the report given him by Captain Benson as the latter had been at the scout's story of the treachery of Nuggett Ned.

"Captain Benson, I do not care to say so to all, but the man was the one known as the Wandering Jew."

"Indeed? I thought there was some mystery about him. Why, he never opened his mouth to me."

"I saw him coming to the camp and halted him, and, as I told you, he gave me a warning that redskins were slipping upon us, and others were within range of hearing of our guns.

"He certainly rendered us good service with that matchless rifle of his, and I shall not be long in getting a repeater like it, for it fires seventeen shots before being emptied.

"But are you sure he is not about the camp, for now that it is light we can see."

"He is not, for I went to find him, to thank him, and found him gone."

"I am sorry, and as he seems to know what he is about, his going would indicate that the Indians will not attack again; for see! they have retreated a long way off, and appear to be discouraged."

"Yes, and no wonder, for it was a terrible blow we gave them, as there lie a dozen dead, as well as I can count them from here, and they must have had twice that many wounded more or less seriously."

"Easily that. But what have we suffered?"

"No loss at all, save one of my men slightly wounded with a bullet, and a couple of the horses killed.

"Their arrows fell short, and they seemed not to have as many rifles as we have."

"No, and of short range and old style."

"I am so glad you got on to the treachery of that Nuggett Ned, or he would have killed you."

"That was his aim. But he'll be dangerous no more."

"Now, what do you say to a retreat?"

"You know best."

"Our rifles are much longer range than the few weapons the Indians have, and we can keep them at a distance, while we can make a rapid retreat to Grizzly Gulch."

"I am ready—what is it, Talbot?" and the captain turned to one of his men, who just then hastily approached him.

"There are plenty of more Indians coming, and at a run," Talbot announced.

"Then retreat is impossible. We must stick to our camp, and one man must go for help," decided Buffalo Bill, and he went to have a good look at the coming redskins, while Talbot again spoke:

"I will make the ride for help, sir."

"Wait until I see what the chances are," and the scout walked to the edge of the timber and glanced about him.

"The Wandering Jew was right.

There are fully a hundred redskins in that band yonder, and I see that they have sent small parties out to surround us.

"Captain Benson, we are hemmed in, and your man cannot get away."

"What is to be done, then, Mr. Cody?"

"My ghastly captors, in their flight night before last, in pursuit of the Wandering Jew, fortunately left their white-handled spades behind them, so we can form a small fort, with the horses about it, and if necessary kill the animals for further protection.

"The spring is near, you have ample provisions, you told me, for several days, and we can stand a siege, for ammunition is plentiful."

"Well, you order and we obey."

"Have two of your men lead the horses to water, four at a time, and two more cook breakfast, while the rest of us can set to work making our fort, and that fellow Nuggett Ned shall work, too, for he can be made to do something.

"Now we'll lose no time, for when those redskins have held a pow-wow with those we beat off they'll make an attack, beyond all doubt."

Captain Benson gave his men the necessary directions to carry out the orders of the scout, and they were all busy at once, watering the horses, throwing up dirt breastworks, and reducing the size of their camp, to be more readily defended.

The packs of plunder, the dead horses, logs and saddles, were brought into service in making the breastworks, which were built in a circle, and the animals were to be corralled in the timber to one side, so if slain they could form with their bodies a still stronger means of protection.

Buffalo Bill, having started the men at their separate tasks, was going over to free the wrists of Nuggett Ned from the irons, and put a spade into his hands.

He also wished to again pay a visit to Red Buffalo, who lay on his blankets slightly apart from the little camp, and see how he was coming on.

On the way he passed the spot where he had stood during the fight and where he had left his rifle leaning against a tree.

But he stopped suddenly and gazed at the rifle, then took it up.

"Why, this is not my rifle!" he exclaimed in amazement.

"No, it is the repeating rifle of the Wandering Jew!"

"What does it mean?"

Hastily he took a cartridge from his pouch and cried:

"But my cartridges fit it—yes, and it is loaded."

"Was this an accident, that he picked up the wrong gun by mistake?"

"But his was not here when I left mine!"

"Could it have been an intentional exchange, for mine is nowhere to be found?"

"Well, I have the very weapon I longed to possess."

CHAPTER XLII.

A RECOGNITION.

It was a surprise, yet a pleasure, for the scout to find that the rifles had been exchanged.

It could but have been an accident, he decided, for why should a man in his sober senses make such an exchange?

It was true that the breech-loading rifle of Buffalo Bill was a splendid weapon, a long-range rifle, carrying a large bullet, and could be loaded and fired very rapidly.

Few guns were its equal at that time on the frontier; but the weapon of the Wandering Jew was one of the new repeating rifles just coming into use, and Buffalo Bill had already written East to have one sent him.

He took up the rifle left him, and examined it carefully.

It was of large bore, the rifles in the barrel were clean, and the sights could be raised to a range of one thousand yards!

There was one load in the barrel and sixteen in the magazine, seventeen in all!

And the seventeen could be fired with fairly good aim, within a minute of time, sooner if at random.

The scout was pleased and mystified. He looked all around for his own gun, but it was gone.

Then he asked all the men about it. No one could tell him save one, who had seen the stranger ally walk out of camp, a rifle on his shoulder.

Then the scout went to where Nugget Ned was and said:

"You must go to work, and if you refuse I'll not only double iron you, but gag you as well. Take your choice."

"I'll work."

"You are wise. Come along."

The irons were removed from his wrists, but when the prisoner found that his ankles were not to be freed he said, bluntly:

"I'll not work."

"Your hands are free, and you do not need your ankles free to handle a shovel."

"Will you work?"

"Not unless I am free."

"Men, it is better to have a dead man in camp than a live traitor, and as this man is a renegade and a would-be murderer, what do you say to hanging him?"

"All right!"

"Hang him!"

"He's no good!"

"String him up!"

The shouts were in earnest, and the face of the prisoner became livid.

"Will it be work or hang?"

"I'll work."

"Watch him, men, and see that he does his share," and Buffalo Bill walked to Red Buffalo's camp.

The Indian was still asleep.

Rousing him with difficulty, Buffalo Bill gave him some strong coffee, and then carried him over to the campfire, where two men were getting breakfast.

Red Buffalo was placed upon a blanket, but seemed dazed.

He looked about him with a curiosity he could not conceal.

He had gone to sleep in the night, and when his comrades were approaching the camp.

He awoke now in the broad glare of day.

His eyes wandered over the plain and fell upon the heap of slain Indians, and a strange look crossed his face, and he turned his eyes upon the scout, then drank down the cup of coffee.

Then his eyes began to rove again.

He saw the men at work, the little fort they were building, and then his eyes lighted up as they saw in the distance the large band of redskins.

He swept the circle with his gaze, and saw that the camp was surrounded, and a gleam of delight swept over his countenance.

Another moment and his eyes fell upon the face and form of Nugget Ned.

Buffalo Bill was watching him closely, for he had been dressing his wounds, putting on fresh bandages saturated with arnica.

Instantly a flash of recognition spread over the redskin's face, and he called out in his own language:

"White Fox, the Gold Chief is, like the Red Buffalo, a prisoner in the hands of his foes!"

There was a start at the words, and Nugget Ned cast a quick glance upon him, and his face grew livid, as he heard Buffalo Bill's low-spoken words:

"I was sure I was not wrong, for the man is known to the Indians, and is a renegade."

"You understand what the Indian said, sir?" asked Talbot.

"Yes."

"So did I, and he gave the white man away as a renegade," declared Talbot, who spoke the Indian tongue well, and then he added:

"I have been watching those redskins closely, sir, and their pow-wow is over, so I think they intend to attack us very soon."

"Yes, but we have time for breakfast, and a little more work on our part," answered Buffalo Bill, as he swept the plain with his glass.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A DESPERATE SITUATION.

When Talbot made the report that he did, and after sweeping the plain with his gaze, Buffalo Bill beckoned for him to follow and walked away from the camp to have a look at the Indians, who were now scattering from the spot where they had been in council and were mounting their ponies with the intention of surrounding the palefaces completely and closing in upon them in a grand charge.

When out of earshot of the camp, Buffalo Bill said:

"I see, Pard Talbot, that you have fought Indians before."

"Yes, sir, I was an army scout in Texas, and afterwards in the Northwest here, until I got captured and spent six months a prisoner to these same redskins."

"But I made my escape and took to digging gold as a safer occupation."

"Then you have an idea how they are going to fight us?"

"Yes, sir, they will surround us completely, close in slowly until within rifle range, and then dash in upon our little fort, and, if we don't check them, they'll enjoy a scalp-dance before night."

"You are right, and I will say to you that the chances are terribly against our checking them."

"They are, indeed, sir."

"We can fight to the last, and then the man who is not killed had better mount a horse and make a break through them as his only chance."

"That is my idea, sir, and I'll stick close to you."

"Now, what do you think of the Indian's recognition of that fellow, Nugget Ned?"

"It was a clear giveaway, sir."

"It was, indeed."

"Why, he spoke of his being a prisoner, as he was, to his foes, and that proves he has been an ally of the redskins."

"It certainly looks so, and I suspected him from the first; but just why he fired at me, as he did, I do not know."

"Your keeping the Indian from being killed by Hercules Dan at least did some good, outside of the humanity of it, for it showed that Nugget Ned was a traitor to his own race, a renegade."

"Yes; but come, let us have breakfast and then get ready for what appears to be the hardest fight of our lives."

"I shall tell the men what they may expect, and, when all hope is gone, if any survive, the only chance will be to mount a horse and break through the Indian ranks, but escape in that way is very doubtful."

The two now walked back to their camp again, and found that all the others had had breakfast and were at work again strengthening the little fort.

The horses had all been hemmed in into a small space and held there by lariats.

Eating his breakfast quietly, Buffalo Bill then put the irons upon Nugget Ned again and made him fast with a lariat to a tree, after which, in a few words, he told the men just what they had to expect and that all depended upon their throwing no shots away and beating off the Indians in their first charge. Then he added:

"They will charge us mounted, men, firing as they come with their guns and

arrows, and you must not expose yourselves."

"You must be cool, aim to kill, not a pony, but a redskin, and not a shot must be wasted, remember."

"Keep cool, for all depends upon it."

"But should they break in upon our guard, then all of you who can must spring for your horses, cut the lassoes, stampede the horses and thus escape, if you can; but this must be resorted to only when our line is broken and there is no longer hope of beating them off."

The men heard the words of the scout in perfect silence.

It was evident that each one understood the full gravity of the situation and would do his best.

Each one realized how much depended upon him individually, and would fight to the last.

Nugget Ned was silent, but there was a malicious gleam in his eye as though he knew the desperate situation the men were in and that the Indians would triumph, thus releasing him.

Red Buffalo, calm, his face emotionless, sat upon his blanket near Nugget Ned, and the scout had not put irons upon him or bound him.

His wounds had been dressed with all care, and he had been simply told to remain quiet, as he had foes among the men who would be only too willing for a chance to kill him.

But, as he sat there, to the surprise of all he called to Buffalo Bill and spoke in his own language, which the scout replied to, and then, taking a pair of steel manacles from his saddle pocket, he put them upon the wrists of the redskin, just as Talbot called out:

"Hark! They are coming!"

CHAPTER XLIV.

BROUGHT TO A HALT.

Talbot was right for he knew that the Indians had started upon their red work the moment he heard the chorus of wild, weird voices raised in the battle song.

Buffalo Bill gazed calmly out upon the plain, for the sight was no new one to him.

There were all of three hundred Indians in sight.

They were mounted upon their ponies now and formed one grand, large ring around them.

A half mile from the little fort, they made a complete cordon about it, and escape seemed impossible.

Here and there chiefs were picked out among them, and the scout recognized the young leader, Red Spirit.

He and his men were mounted now, doubtless upon the ponies of some of the wounded braves and slain ones.

Back where the council had been held there was a group of warriors, the wounded of the band, watching with eager interest the advance of their comrades against their foes.

As they advanced slowly they sang, and the three hundred voices made wild, terrible, uncanny music, enough to strike terror even to the bravest of hearts.

But when they had advanced to within good rifle range and Buffalo Bill was preparing to see what the rifle of the Wandering Jew would do at that distance, the savages' battle song suddenly ceased.

The circle of warriors just as suddenly came to a halt!

What did it mean?

The scout was searching the plain with his glass for the cause, whilst Talbot called out:

"Something has gone wrong with them, sure!"

"I have it!" cried the scout.

His glass was leveled upon the spot in the rear of the circle of braves, where had been left the group of wounded and the prisoners had been held.

There was a stir there, and a call had come from behind them which had brought the circle to a halt.

It was just then that the young chief Red Spirit had been seen.

He was the highest chief of those who had joined his little band and he was in command of all the redskin force in the field.

Watching him closely with his field glass, Buffalo Bill saw the Red Spirit turn his horse and ride back alone, his braves still remaining in the circle.

The men with the scout awaited anxiously for some word from him.

They saw that the Indian prisoner had become excited.

He had heard the battle song cease; the charge of the mounted warriors had not followed, and he knew that something had gone wrong.

Nugget Ned also had become nervous and watchful.

He, too, realized that all was not right.

What could it be?

Had word come that help was advancing for the paleface band?

Had a scout reported that soldiers from Fort Platte were hastening to the rescue?

No one could answer. Had the Indians discovered that the whites were too strongly intrenched for them and meant to give up the attack?

No one vouchsafing a word, all eyes were upon Buffalo Bill and the Indian circle alternately.

The scout had his glass to his eye, and would speak certainly when he knew the cause of the cessation of that battle song, the halt of the Indian line.

Presently he did speak, and all hung upon his words.

Especially did Nugget Ned bend forward to listen, and the fact was not lost upon Buffalo Bill.

The Red Buffalo also, who yet kept his secret that he could speak English, was all attention to the words of the scout.

"Captain Benson, some one has called to the chief from the rear, where the wounded are, and he has halted the line and is returning," said Buffalo Bill.

"Can a scout have come in and reported help coming to us, Mr. Cody?" eagerly asked Captain Benson.

Anxiously all awaited the reply of the scout.

"Some one is advancing from the group in the rear to meet the chief, whom I recognize as Red Spirit, the one who led the raid upon your settlement."

"To me, sir, it looks like a white man who is advancing to meet the chief," said Talbot, who was making a telescope of his hands.

"Yes, I thought so myself, but I see him distinctly now."

"You are right, Pard Talbot, it is a white man, and none other than the stranger who was with us last night," said the scout, while to Captain Benson he added in a whisper:

"Yes; it is the Wandering Jew."

CHAPTER XLV.

SOME MYSTERIOUS INFLUENCE.

To the naked eye of the men in the little fort a man was seen advancing from the council ground to meet the young chief, Red Spirit, who had left the line of braves and was going at a canter toward the one whose call or signal had halted the warriors on their way to battle.

To the glass of Buffalo Bill, and it was a strong one, the one advancing was now plainly revealed, and the piercing glance of Talbot also had discovered that it was no Indian.

He was walking at a slow, dignified step, and Buffalo Bill saw distinctly the tall form, clad in bearskin, the small cap and the long beard and flowing hair, so like the Wandering Jew.

If not the mysterious man known by that name, who was he?

Could there be two men so much alike?

Continuing to keep his glasses to his

eyes, Buffalo Bill saw all that took place.

He saw the Wandering Jew, if he it was, halt and allow the young chief to approach him.

The latter dismounted as he drew rein, and his attitude appeared to be one of respect for the white man, whoever he was.

There they stood, and the young chief seemed to be talking excitedly.

At last the chief was seen to raise his lance high in the air, and upon the top of it was his war bonnet.

First he waved the lance to the right, then to the left, and Buffalo Bill said: "He is calling the chiefs to council."

"The Wandering Jew has certainly given him some news he deems of importance."

As a proof that the scout was right, Talbot said:

"That's what it is, sir, you see! the chiefs are leaving their bands and going toward the Red Spirit."

From the center of their separate bands the chiefs were seen to start and go at a gallop toward the Red Spirit and the Wandering Jew.

There were six of them, and as each one arrived he dismounted and grouped himself about the head chief, facing the white man.

"The Red Spirit is talking now," said Buffalo Bill, and he was seen to be speaking in a somewhat excitable manner.

Then the scout added, after a few minutes:

"Now the white man is having his say, and he is as calm and dignified as a judge."

Soon after the scout continued:

"The other chiefs are taking a turn at the talking now, and there appears to be a difference of opinion, as among palefaces."

"Yes, the lot of them seem to be against the head chief," Talbot said.

Turning to Nugget Ned, Buffalo Bill asked:

"What does it all mean, Nugget Ned?"

The man had also been watching the group of Indians with deepest interest, and he answered promptly:

"It means that the Wandering Medicine Man has brought news that is of a threatening nature to them, and the chief, Evil Spirit, does not wish to give up the attack, that's what it means, and I guess he'll have his way, for he has a big influence."

Buffalo Bill laughed and said:

"How easily you were entrapped into showing that you were a renegade, Nugget Ned!"

"I thought I'd catch you!"

"So you know all about the Indians, do you, and the one who has stopped their attack on us is known to them as the Wandering Medicine Man, is he?"

"What more can you tell us?"

The prisoner was white with rage, and he muttered an imprecation upon the scout, while he saw that he had indeed betrayed himself to all as they gazed upon him in a very ugly manner.

"Well, Mr. Cody, you certainly are clever in getting at the truth," said Captain Benson, and he added:

"There is not the slightest doubt in my mind now as to the fellow being a renegade."

"I was sure of it from the first."

"Yes, he put his foot into it that time," Talbot added.

The attention of all was now again drawn to the chiefs and the Wandering Medicine Man, as Nugget Ned had called the white man in their midst.

There was, beyond doubt, some cause of excitement among them, and then Buffalo Bill said:

"They are returning to their commands again."

"Now, Nugget Ned, we will see if the Red Spirit has his way or not."

Each chief was seen to rejoin his braves and to say a few words to them.

Then, band by band, they turned about and rode away, Red Spirit returning to the council ground whither the white man had been seen to go!

A short halt was made then, but soon they moved off, and in half an hour not a redskin was seen on the plain save the dozen slain.

CHAPTER XLVI.

BUFFALO BILL MAKES A RECONNOISSANCE.

The men in the little fort drew a long sigh of relief when they saw the last redskin disappear over a rise in the plain.

"They have gone, and now we can pull out for home," said Captain Benson, with great delight at the prospect.

"No, captain, not yet," Buffalo Bill rejoined.

"Why, what is the matter now, Mr. Cody?"

"Well, sir, it appears that the Indians have gone, that the Wandering Jew, or whoever he may be, has had a strange influence over them to move off; but redskins are the slyest people on earth and the whole thing may be a trick."

"I don't just see how, Buffalo Bill?"

"In the first place, it may be a trick to have us believe they have gone and when we get out of our stronghold here to pounce upon us and wipe us out, literally."

"If they have gone in good faith, sent off by the influence of that white man, there are malcontents in every band, and these may drop out from the others and lie in wait for us."

"Mr. Cody is right, sir," put in Talbot, whose opinion had great weight with Reuben Benson.

"Then what is to be done, Mr. Cody?" asked the captain.

"I will go out alone, sir, and reconnoiter, so that we will not be entrapped if we leave our fort," replied the scout.

"Would we not be saving time, sir, for me to take one side and you the other?" asked Talbot.

"If you wish, for we can find out in half the time if we both go, and you know just what to do," was the scout's reply.

With this, Buffalo Bill saddled up Paleface and Talbot got his horse, and the two rode away from the fort, the scout telling Captain Benson to be very careful as to keeping a close watch and also to keep his eye upon the prisoners, as well as Hercules Dan, who had been given his freedom, and was loud in singing the praises of the only man who had ever vanquished him.

But this very flattery caused the scout to watch the man more closely.

Talbot was gone until noon and came in then to report two bands of the redskins, who had gone off on his side of the little fort, had pressed on for miles, a sure indication that they at least had not returned.

Buffalo Bill having told Captain Benson to keep the men at work strengthening the little barrier, they wished to knock off when Talbot made his report, saying there was no longer any danger of the redskins and they ought to be then upon their homeward trail.

But Talbot told them that the two bands he had trailed were between them and Silver Mound settlement, and they would be caught in the open and defeated if they started then, for either force of the redskins outnumbered them six to one.

"Wait until Buffalo Bill returns," added Talbot. "He will know just what we can do."

It was nearly sunset when Buffalo Bill was seen coming over the rise.

Paleface was in a canter, but seemed tired.

As the scout rode up he watered his horse at the spring and then staked him out, while he said:

"Bring all the other animals in, captain, and I'll look after my horse later, when he has fed awhile, for he has had a long trail to-day."

"Did you find any Indians, Mr. Cody?"

"Plenty of them, and we will be attacked to-night."

The words fell with a damper upon all who heard them save one, that one being Nugget Ned.

His face lighted up quickly with a gleam of pleasure, and, looking up quickly, Buffalo Bill saw it and said:

"Oh, yes, Nugget Ned, you are rejoiced, I know; you have expected their return; but your life is not a safe insurance just now."

These words changed the look on the man's face, especially when Hercules Dan supplemented:

"Let us hang him, boss."

As for the Indian prisoner, he made no sign to show his joy, and Buffalo Bill went on to say that all the bands had gone out for a hunting expedition save one.

The one was the band of Chief Red Spirit, who had been mounted upon the extra ponies of the other forces. He also had been strongly reinforced by the braves who were in ill humor at having to relinquish their prey from what the white man had told them.

"In twos and threes the malcontents under the other chiefs have been joining the Red Spirit all day. They have scouts around the camp to prevent an escape; so there will be a larger force brought against us to-night, or, rather, before dawn, for they are arranging to attack us, believing we think they are gone and will not be on the watch as before."

"But they are mistaken," said Buffalo Bill, who had made his report in a tone too low for either Nugget Ned or the Red Buffalo to hear.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE SCOUT'S LAST SHOT.

If at first there was any grumbling because they had not been allowed to go home, the men now realized that it would have been madness to have made the attempt with their small force and to have been caught in the open.

They had confidence that Buffalo Bill would do what was best, and Talbot was thoroughly the same way of thinking as was the scout, and his opinion carried much weight with his companions.

He had also reported having seen many small trails leaving the main ones of the bands he had followed, and these, he felt, after hearing about Chief Red Eagle, were the braves who had gone to join the latter.

A certain sign among those who would defy the decision of the other chiefs would soon show the braves that there was one leader who intended to act, and so they dropped out of their bands to join him.

Thus had the Red Spirit, as the scout had reported, gained a large following of the most reckless of the young braves.

As Buffalo Bill was sure that Red Buffalo suspected he had been doctored the night before and after his noonday meal would take nothing to eat or drink, he knew that some plan must be arranged to prevent his betraying to his comrades that the little fort was expecting an attack.

So he hit upon a very clever plan to fool him.

Talbot and Captain Benson mounted their horses and pretended to go off on a scout.

But they went out of sight and there remained in hiding for two hours.

Upon their return to camp each one reported in the hearing of the redskin prisoner and Nugget Ned that there was not an Indian anywhere about, that all had gone.

Upon this, Buffalo Bill assigned one of the men to stand guard and to all the others he gave secret orders that they were to slip away in the darkness from their beds and spread their blankets against the works, where he could arouse them easily when the time came.

He removed the two prisoners over by the horses, so that they did not know where the men were and thus would believe they were all asleep save the man on watch.

To still further carry out the deception, this man was told to go in after all was quiet and take his seat by the fire, which burned low, so the prisoners could see him and believe no one was on watch at all.

But they were badly fooled, for both Talbot and Buffalo Bill had slipped out of the camp and were lying in wait far out, while Captain Benson sat by the works, wide awake.

Thus the night passed until the dawn was near; then Talbot came in and reported all quiet in his front, save a scout or two skulking about, for he had seen them.

Next Buffalo Bill came and found that Captain Benson had awakened all the men upon Talbot's report and they were there awaiting his coming.

There were ten in number, all told, to fight, for Nugget Ned was not to be again trusted with a gun and was in double irons.

But the Red Buffalo had not been ironed by the scout.

"They are in large force and creeping up as they did last night. You can see them yonder in the moonlight," said Buffalo Bill.

The ten men were silent and ready for action, the three extra rifles having been double loaded, as were all the others, for the first volley and stood where Captain Benson and Talbot could seize them after firing their weapons.

The scout rejoiced in having the repeating rifle of the Wandering Jew and also the breech-loader of Nugget Ned to aid them.

"Men," whispered Buffalo Bill.

"If they should break in upon us and I see that all is lost, I will give the order to mount, and those who can do so lie low on your horse and dash away with the stampeded animals."

Nearer and nearer crept the dark mass, and it was seen to be larger than on the night before.

The defenders of the little fort would have a larger force to fight!

But not a man flinched from the ordeal he was to pass through. Nugget Ned and the Red Buffalo, if awake, were awaiting the attack with hope, for they had not heard a sound to tell them that the camp was awake, for the man on watch was apparently fast asleep near the fire, which had now almost died out.

But his rifle was with the others to use, and if asleep he could soon get to his feet when rudely awakened.

"Now, men, be ready, for they are preparing for a rush and we must catch them when grouped close. Fire!"

With Buffalo Bill's command ten rifles flashed as one, then followed the shots of the three extra guns and the rattle of the scout's matchless repeater.

The blow was a staggering one and a complete surprise, and momentarily the Indians shrunk away from the galling rain of bullets which had laid so many of their comrades low.

But a wild yell went up from behind the defenders, and then the words in the Indian tongue:

"The Red Buffalo tells his braves to come on! He is here a prisoner!"

The answer to this came from a hundred throats, and the mass of red humanity came bounding up the hill.

"Take your revolvers, men!" shouted Buffalo Bill, and a terrible war was begun as the men fired their pistols at short range, while shots and arrows were hurled into the little fort by the redskins as they came on, for, having gone against the advice of the council of Chiefs in making the attack, the Red Spirit must triumph or be doomed among his people.

Another moment the Red Spirit sprang upon the barrier, well in the

lead of his braves, and Buffalo Bill cried:

"Take my last shot, chief!"

With the crack of the last shot in the revolver, the Red Spirit fell dead, while Buffalo Bill, seeing but half his force left alive, cried:

"Now to your horses and fly for your lives!"

CHAPTER XLVII.

TRUE TO A FRIEND.

The fire of the Indians under their chief, Red Spirit, had been fatal to the brave defenders of the little fort.

There had fallen Hercules Dan and three others dead, several had been wounded, but Buffalo Bill, Captain Benson and Talbot were unhurt.

When he saw that all was lost, Buffalo Bill had given the order to save themselves by flight upon the horses.

The animals were nearly frantic in their rope corral, but Captain Benson reached the barrier first, followed by two of his men, both the latter wounded.

The captain cut the rope barriers with a slash of his knife and managed to mount a large and fleet horse, though without saddle or bridle.

The two men following him were shot down by the arrows of the Indians, and a third man was knocked down and trampled to death by the stampeding animals.

Talbot made a spring for a horse, grasped his mane, but was dragged off his feet and fell heavily, and a brave was upon him ere he could rise.

Buffalo Bill had tried to reach his splendid horse Paleface, but the animal was already away, and the scout sprang toward a pony, when he felt himself grasped about the neck by a pair of strong arms and heard the words:

"The Red Buffalo will save his white brother."

To have gone on then in an attempt to escape would have been madness, and the scout realized it, so calmly said:

"I can meet my death as a brave man if I must."

The Red Buffalo had come from his retreat, had hopped to the side of the scout, and just then the braves had come plunging into the little fort with blood-curdling yells.

In the early morn they reached the body of their dead young chief, and they had lost heavily, so were maddened at their losses and triumph as well.

But above the chorus of yells came a voice commanding and stern.

It commanded silence at once, and all heard:

"The Red Spirit has gone to the Happy Hunting Grounds, and the Red Buffalo is chief now. Who disputes his title?"

Not a voice was heard in the negative.

He was the next in rank to the Red Spirit; he was one of the bravest of his tribe, and had won many honors, so was beloved and respected by all.

They remembered that in their flight on foot he had demanded to be left alone on the plain that they might save themselves.

They had afterward learned, as will be seen, that his life had been spared by the great white chief Paehaska, who had taken him to his camp, dressed his wounds, and cared for him like a brother.

Now he claimed his right to command, and not one disputed him.

"The chief, Red Buffalo, is glad that his warriors were so brave."

"They were wary in the daylight, and turned away from a battle when they could have won."

"They have been victors now, and there are scalps to hang at their belts."

"There is the booty still here that they took from the paleface villagers; the ponies have gone, but can be caught by my young men, and they have rescued the Red Buffalo and the White Fox, the Gold Chief, for the palefaces have him a prisoner."

"But let not my young men cast angry eyes at my white brother, the great Chief Paehaska, who stands by my side."

"He has saved my life, he has dressed my wounds, has fed me, and I have much to tell of his goodness."

"He is a mighty chief, and will go with the Red Buffalo to his village."

"But he must be bound, that he cannot escape."

"There lies the paleface who was our prisoner, but escaped."

"He is not dead, and will be taken back to our village."

"Let my braves bind him."

"Then let my young men take the scalps of the palefaces and go and bring back the horses."

"Now bring the White Fox to the Red Buffalo."

This speech of the Red Buffalo, as he stood on one leg and supported himself on the shoulder of Buffalo Bill, was well received by the braves, and Nugget Ned, whom he had called the White Fox, was brought before him, the scout coolly taking the manacle keys from his pocket and setting him free, with the remark:

"You win this game, Nugget Ned."

"Yes, and I'll see that you die by torture when we reach the Indian village, Buffalo Bill," was the savage response of the renegade, as he was freed of his irons.

CHAPTER XLVIII. TWO PRISONERS.

At the threat of the renegade white man, who had proven to be just what Buffalo Bill had suspected him of being, the young chief, Red Buffalo, appeared as though he intended to resent it in behalf of his prisoner, for such the scout was.

But instead, he said in a dignified manner:

"The White Fox is the friend of my people, in council and in their village, but he is not a great chief in battle, nor does he lead warriors upon the trail."

"The Red Buffalo is master here, for the head chief, Red Spirit, has gone to the Happy Hunting Grounds."

"The Red Buffalo is wounded, and suffering, but his braves will obey him, and if the great white chief Paehaska had not been his friend, he would now be dead."

"The Red Buffalo will take Paehaska to his village, and the White Fox has no tongue in the council against my paleface brother."

"So the Red Buffalo has spoken."

A glance about him showed Nugget Ned that the braves were all impressed by the words of their new chief.

Whatever their fear and hatred of Buffalo Bill, they looked upon him with admiration as a great chief.

They regarded him as one whose friendship they would be glad to have, and instantly would they have turned against Nugget Ned had their young chief so willed.

So the cunning white man felt that he could bide his time.

If he could not then wreak vengeance upon the scout, later he would have his way when he was a prisoner in the Indian village.

So he said in a tone meant to be conciliatory:

"The White Fox had no wish to harm the white brother of the Red Buffalo."

This settled, Buffalo Bill, not wishing to be bound with a lariat, told the Red Buffalo to put the irons upon his wrists and upon one ankle, for this would give free circulation to the blood, and not bind and cause the swelling the thongs would.

Thus ironed and left, Buffalo Bill had a chance to look about him.

Talbot had recovered from the blow given him, and he, too, was bound, for the Red Buffalo had determined to save him from death also, and carry him to the village alive.

With their two prisoners secure the

Indians began to look after the results of their capture.

They had retaken their plunder, and their braves were bringing in the scattered horses.

The Red Buffalo seemed to be taking an inventory in his mind of just what the result of the victory had been, and was seated upon his blanket a hundred feet from the two prisoners, when he heard:

"The Red Buffalo must have my horse—the white one, or the White Fox will take him."

He gave a nod to show that he understood the words of the scout, and the brave who just then came up with Paleface, all saddled and bridled, as his master had left him for flight, was told that the animal belonged to the Red Buffalo.

"Take the big sorrel, too," said Buffalo Bill, speaking in English as before, the braves who heard him not understanding it, and supposing that he was talking to his fellow prisoner, Talbot.

The Red Buffalo showed himself quick to take a hint, and the sorrel was accordingly appropriated, and just in time, as Nugget Ned came up to take both horses.

The scene in the camp was a sad one to the two prisoners, and by no means a reassuring one for themselves.

Scattered about lay the bodies of their late comrades in the fight, seven in number, and all of them had been scalped and robbed of their weapons and clothing.

But there was one of the gallant band missing, and that was the captain, Reuben Benson, who had been successful in remounting his horse, a fine one, and dashing away with the stampeded animals.

"The captain escaped, I guess, Talbot," remarked Buffalo Bill.

"It looks so, sir, and Heaven grant that he did."

"If so, he will report that we were killed and General Burr will send a force to attack the Indian village, that is, if he has men enough at the fort to risk it, for he had asked for reinforcements before I left."

"Well, I hope we'll be alive to see the fight; but I doubt it," was Talbot's response.

"Don't give up, pard, for I am already planning an escape, and I had it in view when I got Red Buffalo to claim those two horses, for I know them."

"See, they are opening the graves, and will carry their dead with them, but scalp your two friends whom we buried, and leave their bodies with the others to the coyotes."

"That is what they will do, and they are going to move from here soon, I notice."

Both were right in their conclusions, for the two white men were dug up and scalped, and the Indian's dead packed on ponies to carry along with them.

"All of the horses have been brought in, Talbot, except Captain Benson's."

"Yes, and none of the Indians have reported killing him, so he got away; but now for the march," and the prisoners were mounted upon ponies and the start was made for the Indian village, Nugget Ned accompanying them.

CHAPTER XLIX.

NUGGET NED UNMASKED.

It was a long, hard march to the Indian village for them as well as the prisoners, for there was booty to carry, a large number of dead also, and fully a third of the braves were more or less severely wounded.

Nugget Ned kept well in the lead, but lost no opportunity, when the Chief Red Buffalo was not near, of threatening Buffalo Bill and Talbot with a terrible fate when they reached the village.

"You have seen that I have influence with the Indians, and I shall show how much when I reach the village, for the

head chief, Black Eagle, is my friend; he owes me his life, and I believe I have spent months at a time in the village, and every time I visit them, I go loaded down with presents."

"You see, I wish to be their friend, for I am a gold miner, and do not care to be molested in roaming about this country."

"Why, I was the one that told them to make the raid upon Silver Mound settlement, and they got plenty of booty, horses and some three dozen scalps by it."

"The next place they strike will be Grizzly Gulch."

"So you see I am right in the swim with the redskins, and I tell you now, Buffalo Bill, that what I say goes with Chief Black Eagle, and you will find out that I will be the one to condemn you to death in my own way, for the Red Buffalo is too young a chief to have much influence with his people, though I admit he has a big following."

So Nugget Ned ran on, telling of his base nature, and the two prisoners calmly took in all that he said, Buffalo Bill asking:

"Will you tell me why you shot at me when in camp the other day?"

"I don't mind telling you, now I regard you as good as dead."

"Let us have it."

"You killed the Vagabond Gentleman?"

"Yes; I cannot deny it; in fact, have no reason for doing so."

"He left you a belt containing papers and gold."

"Granted."

"The papers contain, as you doubtless know, a full description of a rich claim, with directions how to get there, and a map."

"Indeed, I was not aware of that."

"I begin to feel that you were ignorant of the fact, as when he was dying he did not say much, I learned, and you regarded him as a crank, and so turned the belt over to another."

"Ah! and who?"

"Either Doctor Eugene Douglass, the medicine man of Grizzly Gulch, or Captain John, the boss of the mining camp, as he is called."

"Ah! you think I turned the belt over to one of them to keep for me?"

"Yes, I know you did, or to the Brewer boys, in whose cabin the Gentleman Vagabond died."

"You can take your choice."

"I will, and more, I shall get that belt, for they do not know its value, at least the one who is keeping it."

"Is that so?"

"It is, for you left it to be kept for you."

"Ah!"

"But how will you get it?"

"Why, I shall go to the Indian village, see about you first, then return to Nugget City, and state that I escaped from the Indians, and had joined you and Captain Benson in defending your camp."

"I shall tell how you were tortured to death by the redskins, and I was the sole survivor of the party."

"Well?"

"Then I shall decide which of those I named has that belt, and will say that you, before you died, asked me to get it, and told me what to do with it."

"I see, that will be a great scheme on your part," and Buffalo Bill cast a quick glance at Talbot, who seemed to understand the look.

It was evident to both that scalps had not been counted, and lying down upon his horse and dashing out in the midst of the stampeded animals, Captain Benson had not been seen by the Indians.

Cunning as he certainly was, Nugget Ned had failed to observe that Captain Benson's body was not among the others.

Glad to hear the renegade talk, Buffalo Bill said:

"Now tell me, Nugget Ned, for you are talking to a dead man, as it were, as I am so soon to die—I say, tell me

who the man was who drove the redskins off from their day attack upon us?"

"The same that visited the camp at night and pretended to help you fight the redskins."

"Ah! a renegade, like yourself?"

"Yes; but, unlike me, he is a crank. In fact, I think he is mad, from his actions, and the Indians think so, too, and there is where he has a strong hold upon them."

"But, who is he?"

"A Jew doctor, who came out West on a scientific survey; a geologist, botanist, I have heard, who was captured by the Indians at a time that there was an epidemic in their village, and by his skill he checked it."

"But, he roams about the country, does not live among the Indians, and is, as I said, a crazy fool, though, as you saw, he has influence among the Indians, and kept them from attacking you the other day."

"How did he do it?"

"He told them, so the braves gave me to understand, that you had me and the Red Buffalo prisoners, and would put us to death if they attacked us."

"The Red Spirit wished to take the chances, but the other chiefs were against him, and so the attack was not made, I am glad to say, and we were not killed, as I believe we would have been by you, or your men."

"But the Red Spirit decided to come back and risk it?"

"Yes, and got you and rescued the Red Buffalo and myself," and the renegade rode on in advance again, leaving the two friends to ponder over the fact of his so completely unmasking himself.

CHAPTER L.

NUGGET NED WINS.

When Nugget left the two prisoners alone once more, there was no one near them save the two guards who rode behind, and who could not understand English.

They were both ironed and bound to their horse as well, but they could look for no better treatment, and, in fact, Red Buffalo had ordered that they should not be abused.

"Well, Pard Talbot, that renegade gave himself dead away, so sure was he that we were as good as already on the trail to the Happy Hunting Grounds," said Buffalo Bill.

"He did, indeed, but he does not know that Captain Benson escaped, as I feel sure that he did, and we have the satisfaction of knowing that if we do go under, and he returns to the settlements he will run his head into a rope end."

"Yes; but we must see to it that we do not go under, and get back to punish him ourselves, for I never say die until I am in my grave!"

"You are right, Pard Cody, and if there is a loophole of escape we will get away."

"You, I guess, stand the best chance, for the Red Buffalo will fight for you, if need be, but I guess I'm gone up, though I don't give up by any means and shall be ready to take advantage of all that comes our way."

"That is right, pard, and something tells me that we will get there."

"But what do you think of what he said about the Wandering Jew?"

"Guess he's about right."

"Somehow I do not believe he used his influence to save Nugget Ned and the Red Buffalo, for he did fight well, and did not pretend to, as the renegade did, and he did come to warn us."

"No, the man may be mad, a crank, or whatever else the renegade calls him, but he is not a traitor to his own race, I am sure."

"I hope not, and you talked with him and know him best."

"Do you keep your eyes and ears open, Pard Talbot, and I will do the same, and never say die."

"Now we are going to camp."

When the Indians went into camp for the night, Buffalo Bill called to Red Buffalo, who was riding his horse Paleface, with the scout's saddle and bridle on him, and suggested that he again dress his wounds.

As they were painful, the young chief was glad to have him do so, and thus was seen the strange spectacle of the white prisoner, after having finished with the Red Buffalo, engaged in bandaging up and dressing the wounds of the braves, whom he had called to him for the purpose.

It was evident that the scout made a decided hit in his favor by this act of humanity, as Talbot said:

"That was a dead center shot on your part, pard, for they are all pleased."

But Nugget Ned was not pleased, and showed it in his looks.

The next morning early the march was resumed, and it was nearing sunset when the band drew near the Indian village in the mountains.

Runners had been sent on ahead, to tell that the Red Spirit had been killed, the Red Buffalo was chief, numbers of warriors had been killed, many were wounded, but Silver Mound Settlement had been burned, many scalps taken, plenty of booty and ponies captured, a battle with Rangers had been won, and more scalps taken, while the great white chief Paehaska, had been captured, and the Gold Finder, as Talbot had been named when among the redskins, had been recaptured.

In spite of their losses, the Indians felt that they were more than balanced by the splendid results, for Paehaska alone, as prisoner, was worth the scalps of a dozen braves.

When the band marched into the village, singing their war-song of victory, the whole population turned out to see them.

The heroism of Red Buffalo in leaving himself as a sacrifice on the trail had already been told by the runners, as well as his having been thrice wounded and become chief by the Red Spirit's death, and he was welcomed as a hero of heroes.

There was weeping for the dead, and wailing galore, but the shouts of victory soon silenced all, and when Buffalo Bill and Talbot were thrust into a tepee, and securely guarded, the whole village was wild with excitement, and brilliant as day with camp-fires.

The prisoners were glad to find rest for themselves after the exciting and fatiguing days and nights through which they had passed, and they were soon fast asleep, unmindful of the terrible din about them, and the death that seemed to be hanging over them.

The next morning a grand burying scene was the order of the early morning, and the village echoed with wild lamentations of those mourning for their loved ones.

In the afternoon a great powwow was called, and then began a fight for mastery between the renegade White Fox and the young chief Red Buffalo, as to who should have his way.

It did not take the prisoners long, understanding the Indian language as they did, and the signs that meant so much, that, in spite of his heroism and influence, the day was going against the Red Buffalo.

Had it been any ordinary man the young chief might have saved his prisoner, but with Paehaska in their power the whole village was wild to see the great white chief die by torture.

And so did White Fox, the gold chief, carry the day, and it was with the most malignant face of triumph that he entered the tepee of the two prisoners and said:

"Well, Buffalo Bill, I told you I would win, and I have come to tell you that you and your pard have but a few days to live; so try and recall your forgotten prayers and prepare for death."

CHAPTER LI.

BUFFALO BILL'S SCORN.

If the renegade white wretch, Nugget Ned, had expected to see Buffalo Bill and Talbot turn pale and cower before him, he was mistaken, for they simply looked at him with unmoved faces, and the scout answered:

"Why, we expected that. Tell us something new."

"You put on a bold face now, but just wait until you are tortured and see how you will change."

"I feel that I can die as other men have, renegade, and you can just look on and see."

"Ah! that is just it, for that pleasure will be denied to me."

"Haven't the nerve, eh, to look on?"

"Not that, for I am no coward, and I hate my own race, for I have been badly treated."

"Yes, a fugitive from justice for your crimes, you think the whole world has gone wrong; but, why can you not stay to see Talbot and myself die?"

"I am going away."

"No! How we will miss that villainous face of yours."

"I am going to Grizzly Gulch, now that I am sure you left the Vagabond's belt there, and get it before it is opened, as it may be if it is known you were captured."

"I see; and you are going to get it from Doctor Douglass, Captain John, the Brewer boys, or whomever I left it with, and so become the possessor of a rich gold mine?"

"Yes; that is just it."

"And won't stay to see us die?"

"I dare not lose time, and the Indians granted the Red Buffalo's request to allow you to live for a week."

"Very kind of them; but now do us a favor."

"What is it?"

"Go hang yourself, shoot yourself, or do anything to get out of our sight," said the scout, momentarily losing his calmness as he gazed upon the cruel face of the renegade.

The latter only laughed, and replied:

"I go, but I am sorry I cannot oblige you as to killing myself."

"You won't be lonesome, however, as the squaws and children will soon begin to visit you, and both of you will understand what that means."

They did indeed, for it meant petty insults and torture from the women and children.

But the renegade, raising his hat with mock politeness, left the tepee, and soon after they saw him ride out of the village alone, evidently in haste to return to Grizzly Gulch and secure the treasure which he felt that he now would get.

To obtain the legacy left to Buffalo Bill by the Gentleman Vagabond, he had followed the scout from the mining camps to kill him, believing that he would find it on the body of the man he had slain.

By a strange oversight, from where he stood when he fired, the Red Buffalo had been hidden by a tree, but, seeing that he had missed his aim, and that another person was in the camp, he fled with all speed, not anxious to have Buffalo Bill upon his trail.

This much he had explained to the Red Buffalo, who had made it known to the scout.

"Well, pard, if we cannot escape we are surely doomed," said Buffalo Bill, as he watched through the opening in the tepee the renegade ride out of the camp on his trail to Grizzly Gulch, in spite of the fact that it was nearly sunset.

"Yes, Mr. Cody, and being here in the centre of this Indian village does not look much like escape for us," answered Talbot.

"No; but I don't give up. Death to me yet looks a long way off, and we may be able to get away. But, look! there comes a man over that hill. It is not an Indian, as well as I can see for the trees."

"It is not an Indian," answered Talbot, quickly, and as the one they were gazing upon came better in view, Buffalo Bill said, earnestly:

"As I live, it is the Wandering Jew!"

CHAPTER LII.

A MAN OF IMPORTANCE.

The two prisoners in the tepee in the Indian village kept their eyes upon the white man approaching, and whom Buffalo Bill had pronounced to be none other than the Wandering Jew.

But a short while before, from a trail that branched off just outside of the village, from the one the man was now entering by, Nugget Ned the Renegade had departed upon his mission to Grizzly Gulch.

"I am glad that he left before the Wandering Jew came," said Buffalo Bill.

"You really think it is the Jew then?" asked Talbot.

"I know that it is him."

"Yes, I recognize his upright form, clad in buckskin, his long hair and beard, his lope, and he walks as a man who wore moccasins, and not boots with heels."

"He is the one who aided us in the first fight in the camp."

"Yes, and left his repeating rifle in place of my breech-loader, which, though a fine weapon, was no match for his gun."

"He has a rifle slung at his back now."

"Mine, doubtless."

"And is on foot."

"He never appears to ride."

"And Red Buffalo has your rifle now, or rather the one the Jew left."

"Yes, and all the rest of my outfit, and now he has yours too, Talbot."

"Little good it will do me now."

"Maybe not, and yet I have confidence in the Red Buffalo, that he does not wish to see us die."

"You, you mean, pard?" said Talbot sadly.

"Well, we leave or stay together, Pard Talbot, for I am not one to save myself and leave a comrade to die."

"I know that, indeed, and I hope we may escape."

"At any rate, I feel more hopeful now the Wandering Jew has come into camp."

"So do I."

"But look, he has been seen, and his coming appears to impress the Indians greatly."

"It does, indeed."

"He appears to be a man of importance from the way all flock to meet him."

The Wandering Jew had come by a trail which enabled the two prisoners to keep him in view through the opening in their tepee.

They saw as he came down the steep trail into the valley in which the village was situated, that squaws, children and a few braves pressed around to meet him.

If he noticed them the two pards did not observe it, for he pressed forward with the same rapid, earnest step as before, making his way toward the tepee of the head chief Black Eagle, a stern, cruel and bloodthirsty old man, that his people stood in great awe of.

In going to the tepee of the Black Eagle, he passed on out of sight of the two prisoners, and they could only talk together and conjecture as to why the Wandering Jew had come to the Indian village.

The sun set, night came on, and the village seemed to have a spell of strange gloominess upon it.

An old squaw came with the supper of the prisoners, and they knew that the Red Buffalo saw to it that they were not starved, though there was not much to tempt their appetites in what was brought them.

An Indian guard was kept constantly near the tepee by day, and at night slept in there with the prisoners, but he had

not yet come in to bed, and Buffalo Bill asked the old squaw in her own tongue:

"Who was the paleface who came into the village to-day?"

The squaw was not unkind, for she was the mother of the Red Buffalo, and knew that she owed it to the scout that her son had not been killed; in fact, the whole camp knew all that Buffalo Bill had done for the young chief, and that was why he and Talbot had not thus far been abused.

"It was the Wandering Medicine Man, a paleface," she answered.

"Is he a prisoner?" innocently asked Buffalo Bill.

The answer warmed up the old squaw, and she went back to her first knowledge of the Medicine Man, and told all that he had done for her people, and how they loved him, though they bitterly hated the palefaces, save those who became redskins at heart.

She also said that the mighty white medicine man came and went at his own will, and held great power with her people.

That he was a man of much importance in the tribe, and she had heard that he had come now to the village to tell of a strange dream that he had had, and to beg the chiefs to do his will and save their people from destruction.

Suddenly, as though alarmed at having said so much, the old squaw hastened from the tepee, and a few moments after the night guard came in, and, rolling his blankets about him, lay down to rest, an example the two prisoners followed, though not to sleep, for their minds were busy in the coming of the Wandering Jew.

CHAPTER LIII.

AN INDIAN'S FRIENDSHIP.

The old squaw Bending Willow was on hand early with breakfast for the prisoners, and after looking about to see that the guard was some distance away, she said:

"The son of Bending Willow, the great young Chief Red Buffalo, tells her words for the ear of Paehaska."

"Well, Paehaska's ears are open; what has the Bending Willow to say to him?" replied the scout.

The squaw, standing in the entrance to the tepee, and where she could see the approach of the guard or any one else, said in a low tone that the chiefs would not listen to the words of the Red Buffalo and spare the great white Chief Paehaska.

The wandering medicine man had come to the village and told Black Eagle how he had had a dream in which he had seen Paehaska a captive of the Indians.

Then the dream had faded and he saw an open grave in which Paehaska lay, slain by the Black Eagle and his people.

Another vision had come before him, and he had seen the Black Eagle and his people shot down and hiding for their lives, their village in ashes, and their foes were paleface soldiers who shouted as they killed:

"You have killed Paehaska!"

"We avenge him!"

But the Black Eagle would not listen to the wandering medicine man, but told him that he did have the Chief Paehaska a prisoner, and a comrade also, and he intended to kill them, and would fight those who came to avenge.

Then the old squaw went on to say that the Red Buffalo loved his people, he had their good at heart, and he wished to save them.

He loved his white brother, Paehaska, and would not see him die, and so he had told the Bending Willow to ask him how to make sleep come on the Indian guard, as he had on him when in the paleface camp, and when the brave was in slumber, she, the Bending Willow, would come and lead the Paehaska to where he would find his own horse all ready for him, with his weapons also, and some food she would prepare for him.

Buffalo Bill listened to all she said, and then replied:

"Paehaska thanks the Bending Willow and the Red Buffalo, whom he knows is wounded and cannot come himself to see him; but he will not go unless his friend here goes also."

"If the Bending Willow does not help both to go, then Paehaska will stay and die, and the red people will have to fly before the paleface soldiers, as the Wandering Medicine Man declared they did."

"The Paehaska has spoken."

The Bending Willow turned without a word and walked away, while Talbot said:

"That settles it, pard, and much as I admire you for your act, I am sorry, for you did wrong, as one victim is enough."

"She will have more to say when she brings our noonday meal."

"It is lucky I have the keys of our irons, and then I have some morphine, too, so we can give that red guard a sound sleep while we skip."

"So the Wandering Jew came here with a dream to save us, and he knew best how to influence the Indians; but they were too glad to get hold of Paehaska to let him go; but you mark my words, he will try another game to free us."

"I believe that he will."

"Oh, yes, he won't stop at dreams."

"He'll try something tangible next time."

The Bending Willow came at noon, just when the brave on guard over the prisoners was eating his dinner a short distance away.

Standing where she could see him, she said in effect that the Red Buffalo had heard what the Paehaska had spoken, that he would have the other paleface captive also set free.

She said that she would bring a good supper, and a dish all Indians liked, but they must not eat of it, for in that she would put the "bad medicine" to make sleep come, and the guard would eat that, for she would bring all just when the brave's supper was brought.

When the brave was asleep she would come and guide the Paehaska and his brother to the spot where the horses would be ready.

With this the squaw departed, and Buffalo Bill said:

"There was no need of telling us not to eat that dish the brave would like, for it will be a dog stew."

"Yes, but I hope she won't get the morphine powder into the wrong dish, as we would be in a stew."

"Decidedly."

"No, I guess she'll be careful."

"I hope so, Pard Cody."

"It looks as though we were going to escape."

"It does."

"And the Wandering Jew is still in the village."

"Yes, and is remaining for a purpose."

And so the friends talked on, and the day passed.

With the night came the brave who was to guard the prisoners, and soon after his supper was brought to him.

But ere he could begin to eat it, up came the Bending Willow, and the tempting flavor of dog stew made the bold warrior smack his lips and look enviously at the prisoners, who should be so well treated.

CHAPTER LIV.

RED BUFFALO'S ALLY.

"Will my red brother have some dog stew, for palefaces do not like it."

Buffalo Bill asked the question with an innocent manner, but a sly twinkle was in his eye, and Talbot turned his head away to conceal a smile.

The light came from a fire just outside, and the brave's face lighted up with pleasure at the invitation to "pitch in."

And the way he did "pitch in" that dog stew was a surprise to the two prisoners, yet a pleasure.

The Bending Willow seemed hurt that her epicurian dish was not relished by the prisoners, and pretended to be angry that the Indian guard should eat it all.

But she soon departed, and Buffalo Bill at once proposed to go to sleep.

This the guard did not seem to object to, after his hearty meal, and he stretched himself across the entrance to the tepee, and that the Bending Willow had made no mistake with the powder they soon discovered, as a kick or two failed to arouse the Indian.

The fire burned low, the village became quiet, and only now and then an Indian or two could be seen stalking about, wrapped in a blanket, though the weather was not really cold.

At last a form appeared in the entrance of the tepee, bent and enveloped in a blanket even to the head.

A slight touch of the foot failed to disturb the sleeping brave, and the visitor uttered no word but motioned to put a blanket about them, and then the prisoners should follow, for their arms and feet were free of the irons.

They silently arose and obeyed, and the three muffled forms stole away in the darkness just as a silvery glow appeared over the mountain, indicating that the moon would soon rise.

A walk of half a mile and they came to the corral, and here the scout and Talbot found Paleface saddled and bridled, and by his side the large sorrel, also equipped for the trail.

A bag of provisions hung to the saddle horn, and there also were the rifles and weapons of the two men.

Motioning for the two men to mount, the blanket-enveloped form, still bent over as with age, led the way for nearly a mile, where a trail down the mountain was found, and silently pointed to it, then turned to go.

"Hold! You are not the Bending Willow," said Buffalo Bill.

"No, I vas te Vandering Jew," came the reply.

"I half suspected it.

"We owe our lives to you then, my dear sir."

"Te Red Buffaloes vant to save you, and te Bending Willow vas going to try; but I talks mit te young chief, and tell him I vas help you all right, and no-podies know noddings.

"Good night, mine frints."

"But wait, my dear sir, and—"

But the Wandering Jew was gone, stepping quickly from the trail into the thicket, whither he could not be followed on horseback.

"Well, Talbot, what do you think of that?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"He saved us."

"Yes."

"And was in with the Red Buffalo."

"So it seems."

"It is best, for the young chief will not be suspected."

"No, nor the Bending Willow."

"If they suspect the Wandering Jew, I have an idea that he can take care of himself."

"So I think, but my idea is that the red gentleman who so loves dog stew, will be the scapegoat."

"No."

"Why not?"

"You remember what we heard the Indian guards talking about your wonderful powers to put any one to sleep, if you willed?"

"Oh, yes."

"The Red Buffalo never knew that he was drugged in our little pit, but thought you had put him to sleep, and, as from the dose of morphine you gave that Indian guard, they will have some trouble awakening him, the reds will believe you put him under a spell, and he will not be blamed for it, either."

"But now we must push the breeze out of this."

"Yes, indeed, for we will have to go slow until we strike good traveling on the lowlands."

And so the two friends rode on down

the mountain, and halted only after sunrise at a small stream for rest and breakfast.

The Bending Willow had prepared them only some cooked Buffalo meat, but they were content, and congratulated themselves that she had not given them dog stew.

"Which way first, pard?" asked Talbot, as they started again, for from there they had either to march off to the left to go to Fort Platte, or to the right to Grizzly Gulch or Silver Mound Settlement.

"First to Grizzly Gulch, for our friend Nugget Ned must be looked after, and then to Fort Platte, for by that time the Indians will be in force after us and ready to do damage," was Buffalo Bill's reply.

"Yes, first after Nugget Ned, if Captain Benson has not already gotten him into trouble," continued Talbot.

CHAPTER LV.

A VILLAIN UNMASKED.

Riding as they did, at a good pace, Buffalo Bill knew that it would be after nightfall before he and Talbot would reach Grizzly Gulch.

But this was just what he wished, as he did not care to let Nugget Ned get word of his being in the camp.

He had an idea, as did Talbot also, that Captain Reuben Benson had gone direct to his home at Silver Mound Settlement, to report the fatal ending of the pursuit of the Indians, and that all had been killed by his party, and Buffalo Bill as well, for he did not know that he and Talbot had been spared.

If he had gone to Silver Mound, then he would not know of Nugget Ned's escaping death also by his being the ally of the Indians.

On their way the two pards came upon a trail they knew was the renegade's, for Buffalo Bill, it will be remembered, had followed his horse before, and well knew that he and Talbot had been spared.

The sun set when the riders were yet half a dozen miles from Grizzly Gulch, and they decided to ride in as quietly as possible, put up their horses at the Crow's Nest, and then seek Captain John and find out just where Nugget Ned had his home.

They reached Captain John's corral, put up their horses, and found the landlord in his office, giving him a start as he looked up and beheld Buffalo Bill standing before him.

"Buffalo Bill!"

"My God! What a start you gave me, for I believed you dead," he exclaimed.

"No, I am very much alive, as you see, and so is my pard here, Fred Talbot."

"Shall I tell you who told you we were dead?"

"Nugget Ned, a prospector and an all-round good fellow, as you must know."

"He said that he was the only one who escaped in the massacre of those in your camp."

"He lied."

"See here, Buffalo Bill, Nugget Ned is my particular pard, and as square as steel, so don't slander him to me, or you and I will fall out."

"As to our falling out, Captain John, I care neither for your friendship nor your hatred; but I repeat that your particular pard Nugget Ned lied, for we are here."

"That is true; but it is rather a hard way of putting it, after all Ned did for you."

The two pards laughed, and Buffalo Bill said:

"See here, Captain John, I do not wish to believe you care to uphold a murdering renegade, thief and one who is all else that is bad."

"I do not; but do you make this charge against Nugget Ned?"

"I do, and more, as you shall hear, for a wretch more infamous does not

live, as I am here to prove to you and be responsible for my words.

"But first, tell me what Nugget Ned reported to you?"

Captain John seemed impressed by the words and manner of Buffalo Bill, and said:

"He came back yesterday, and appeared to be half dead."

"He told me of warning you of danger from the Indians, and that you did not believe him; but that he remained to aid you all in the fight."

"In the attack by overwhelming numbers, you, this gentleman and himself were spared to be taken to the Indian village; but he, speaking their language and having a good friend among the redskins, planned the escape of you two and himself, and was successful, though you and his friend were overtaken and shot, he escaping on his own horse, killing the chief who rode him."

"Well, Captain John, he has told you a tissue of infamous lies."

"He first tried to kill me in camp, and there is the wound he gave me."

"Now, you shall have the whole story of his treachery and infamy."

And the story was told from the shot in the camp, to Nugget Ned's leaving the village, believing that Buffalo Bill and Talbot would be tortured to death by the Indians.

"Now, Captain John, where can I find Nugget Ned, for he shall be my prisoner, or a dead man within the hour."

"Well, Buffalo Bill, I certainly am deeply pained and surprised; but I cannot doubt what you tell me, and in fact, my eyes are opened by it to things I could not understand in Nugget Ned's life."

"I will send for him to come here, for to attempt to take him in the saloon where he now is, would cause more than one death."

Captain John called one of his Chinese servants and sent him to the saloon after Nugget Ned, who was not long in coming.

Buffalo Bill and Talbot stood just outside of one door, while Nugget Ned entered the other, and Captain John said abruptly:

"Ned, Buffalo Bill is not dead, as you reported."

"My God!" broke from the man's lips, and, white as a corpse, he leant heavily against the wall.

"What disturbs you so, Ned?"

"It was such a shock, for I was sure he was dead."

"Where is he, Captain John, and how did you get the news?" and the man's teeth fairly clicked together with terror.

"I am here, Nugget Ned!"

"And you are my prisoner!"

With the words Buffalo Bill stepped into the door behind the renegade.

CHAPTER LVI.

A HALT ON THE TRAIL.

If Captain John had needed a proof of Nugget Ned's guilt, as accused by Buffalo Bill, he certainly had it in the face and action of the man.

Again the renegade saw that Buffalo Bill had him covered, and he beheld with him Talbot, whom he had also said was dead.

But he could not have drawn a weapon had his life depended upon his doing so. He was livid, trembling, and wholly unnerved.

The dream of his guilty life, to obtain a fortune, he saw fade from him in an instant.

And more, he saw the gallows rise before him for his crimes.

Even more, he felt, with no time for delay and trial, that he was liable to be seized and hanged by the miners as a renegade.

So it was that he stood unable to move or utter a word.

Stepping close up to him, Buffalo Bill

slipped upon his hands the manacles he had before worn when in the little camp, and which the scout had brought with him from the Indian village.

The touch of the iron seemed to revive him, and he faltered out:

"Captain John, do you believe the charge that I am a renegade?"

His voice was low and faltering, and the answer came quickly:

"Who said you were a renegade, Nugget Ned?"

A cry broke from the lips of the man, when he saw how he had betrayed himself, and Captain John continued:

"You have accused yourself, Nugget Ned."

"I have always liked you, and did not believe you were leading a double life."

"We have had business transactions, and you have always acted square with me; but you were playing your part to win double from me."

"I am not a good man, don't profess to be, am out here to make money, and take care of myself as best I can; but I am no outlaw, desperado, road-agent or renegade, and I tell you now that you deserve to hang, and doubtless will, if Buffalo Bill don't get you quickly away from Grizzly Gulch, and I urge it, though I'd get a coroner's fee, for sitting on your body, and another for hanging you."

"No, Nugget Ned, I'm not of your stripe, if I am no saint, and bad as I may be, I thank heaven that I am not playing in the same game with you."

"What will you do with him, Mr. Cody?"

"I shall start for Fort Platte, as soon as you can have some provisions put up for us; give us a pair of your best horses, and some supper."

"But you need rest."

"Yes, but this is no time for a man to think of rest, for if I am not mistaken, in less than twenty-four hours a thousand warriors under that old scamp Black Eagle will be sweeping along the settlements, and I advise you to get every man you can together to defend Grizzly Gulch, while Pard Talbot will start at once for Silver Mound settlement to warn the people there, and at Sunrise Hill also."

"And you will warn the fort?"

"Yes, I shall push on to Fort Platte with all speed, to tell General Burr, who will doubtless send a large force in this direction to try and catch the redskins."

"I hope so; but you are not going to take your prisoner with you?"

"You bet I am."

"But I can keep him here."

"No, the men might hang him, or he find some way to escape."

"If I get him to the fort, he will be tried and executed, and that will put a damper to this renegade business among white men."

"Suppose you are attacked on the way?"

"My first act will be to kill my prisoner," was the stern reply, and Nugget Ned shuddered at the possibility.

Seeing that Buffalo Bill was determined to go, Captain John made the arrangements for his departure to the fort, and Talbot's going to warn the other settlements.

Half an hour after the scout and his prisoner rode away from Grizzly Gulch on the long and perilous ride to Fort Platte, while Fred Talbot, also well mounted, started off in the opposite direction on his mission of warning.

But Buffalo Bill, to the surprise of his prisoner, did not take the direct trail out of the camps, but went on up the gulch until he drew rein at a small cabin, the door of which was open, while a fine tenor voice was heard within singing an old-time ballad.

At the call of Buffalo Bill the occupant of the cabin ceased his song and stepped to the door.

It was Doctor Eugene Douglas, who had so well testified in behalf of the scout for killing the gentleman vagabond.

CHAPTER LVII.

A PLAN THAT WOULD NOT WORK.

When Doctor Eugene Douglass appeared at his cabin door he came like one who was prepared to greet friend or foe, for his hand rested carelessly upon his revolver.

By the light shining out of the open door he recognized his visitors and called out, in a friendly way:

"Ah! Buffalo Bill and Nugget Ned."

"Dismount, gentlemen, and come in."

The doctor had failed to see that Nugget Ned's hands were manacled, and his feet tied beneath his horse.

But the scout said:

"Thanks, doctor, we have no time to dismount, and I only called to say to you that the belt I left in your keeping please retain under the same conditions as before."

"I will, Mr. Cody; but I had gotten anxious about you, as you did not return the next day, as you expected to do, and then I was sent for to go to Silver Mound Settlement, for the Indians played havoc there, and I only returned a few minutes ago, and was about to go up to Captain John's to see if you had left any word for me with him."

"No, but your absence accounts for your not having heard any news; but ask Captain John to tell you, and still keep the belt for me."

"I must press on now, so good-night, and—"

"Why, Nugget Ned is in irons!" cried Doctor Douglass, for the first time observing the fact.

"Yes, but I have not time to explain now, yet Captain John will."

"Good-night," and Buffalo Bill rode on with his prisoner, leaving the astonished doctor looking after them, and wondering what the matter was, for Nugget Ned was regarded as one of the solid men of Grizzly Gulch.

His having been called away to Silver Mound Settlement to look after the wounded there had accounted to Buffalo Bill for his not having seen the renegade or heard his story of the massacre of the scout and Captain Benson and his men.

Buffalo Bill and his prisoner continued on the trail, that soon led out of the gulch and into the one leading to Fort Platte.

The moon came up as they rode along, and though a couple of miles were passed over in silence, the prisoner at last broke it with the remark:

"I say, Cody, are you not fond of money?"

"I am."

"You work for gold?"

"Yes."

"And would like to earn a nice little sum?"

"If I can do so honestly."

"Bah! What is honesty?"

"Nothing to a thief, but much to an honorable man."

"Do you know an honest man?"

"If I did not know many I would be a very poor specimen of a man myself."

"Well, I am on earth for what there is in it for me."

"I am here to stay as long as I can, and am not here for a flying visit, if I can have my way."

"So I judge."

"Circumstances brought me out to this border—"

"For your health you came, I guess."

"Yes, I did not care to die of the rope fever, and when I got here I set out to make money."

"I tried prospecting, made friends with old Black Eagle, so I could have the good will of his tribe, and go where I pleased, and I tried to get gold as best I could."

"And did get some by criminal acts?"

"Well, I got it, and that's enough for you to know."

"I have considerable laid aside, too; but if I am to hang, what good is it to me?"

"None."

"Then, if I live, I can get more, and

so I have a business proposition to make to you."

"Well?"

"You are taking me to the fort?"

"Yes."

"Your testimony will hang me?"

"Guess it will."

"If I should escape by your being chased by Indians, and the chances are that you will be, you would not be to blame."

"Yes, I would."

"How so?"

"Knowing, then, what you are, what damage you could do with the redskins, and have done, I'd be to blame for not shooting you when I saw there was a possibility of your escaping."

"But suppose I told you that of the twelve thousand I have in gold you should have half; that I would take you now to where it is hidden, and let you have half, if you allowed me to escape, what would you say?"

"That I could promise, and then go with you and take it all, and while going there I would be losing valuable time that might cause the loss of many lives, and that I can neither be bought to sell out my honor, or let such a man as you escape."

"Come, I hear the sound of hoofs behind us, and we must ride on—no, some one may be sent to overtake me with a message, so we'll wait for them here, or rather ride slowly and let them catch up," and the renegade answered only with deep imprecation upon the man he could not bribe to do wrong.

CHAPTER LVIII.

HELD AT BAY.

The moonlight enabled Buffalo Bill to see, as he rode along with his prisoner, a party of horsemen come into the valley behind him and follow along on the trail after him.

He counted them, and saw that there were seven.

Why such a number should be sent after him he could not understand, if a message was to be delivered.

Or, perhaps, they feared meeting redskins, and so a number had come along.

Then he suspected that they had come to continue on with him as an escort, perhaps sent by Captain John.

Just then he came to a piece of rugged traveling, where the horses had to go in a slow walk, and at the same time he heard his name called.

"Ho, Buffalo Bill, we have information for you," cried a voice.

The scout at once halted and faced about.

But he did not release his hold on the bridle rein of the horse ridden by his prisoner, and he slipped a revolver out of his belt with his right hand, holding it concealed, but ready for quick use.

A moment after the horsemen dashed up and halted in a group, facing him, while the leader said:

"Buffalo Bill, Captain John sent us after you to say that he has news that the Indians are between you and the fort, and he wants you to ride with all speed for help, and that you may have nothing to detain you, he says we'll guard your prisoner safely back to the gulch, where he'll be kept safe for you."

"You tell Captain John, please, that I am going on as rapidly as the horses will stand, but that I can take the prisoner with me."

"How he got his news about the Indians I do not know, but I'll wager big money that there are none between here and the fort, and will not be before to-morrow sometime."

"Then you won't let us take the prisoner back?"

"No; for I can take care of him and myself, too."

"Well, you better."

"I say no, and as I do not wish to delay longer, I'll say good-night."

"You won't, though."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you give up Nugget Ned to us."

"That I refuse to do."
 "We don't want to kill you, but you must give up our pard."
 "Ah! that is your game, is it?"
 "It is."
 "Well, I suspected as much."
 "Now you know it, you know what to do."
 "I do, and shall do it."

Quick as a flash Buffalo Bill thrust his revolver muzzle hard against the side of Nugget Ned, just over his heart, and said sternly:

"If you want him you'll have to take his dead body, for I'll pull trigger if you make an attempt to draw a revolver."

The men were nonplussed at this bold move, and seemed hardly to know what to say or do.

At last one blurted out:

"That's only a bluff game o' his, pard."

"Before heaven, I mean what I say."

"Go, or I'll pull trigger on Nugget Ned!"

There was no misunderstanding the words or the tone.

He meant what he said.

And Nugget Ned realized it.

So far he had been silent, but whether he knew the men Buffalo Bill did not know.

The scout, however, thought that Captain John had told of the renegade's capture, and some of his friends had quickly mounted and ridden on after him to rescue their pard.

That he believed Buffalo Bill was in earnest, Nugget Ned showed by his quick and earnest cry:

"For God's sake, draw off, men, for he means what he says."

"Do you mean for us to back now, Nugget Ned, and let him take you on to take your chances?"

"He will kill me as he threatens, I know."

The men were silent. The eyes of the scout were on them all, and a movement of a hand would have been the signal for him to pull trigger.

But as they sat in undecided mood, the quick clatter of coming hoofs caught the scout's acute ears, and he said:

"Say what you'll do, men, for others are coming, I hear."

They, too, now heard the sound, and the leader called out:

"We tried to save you, Nugget Ned, but that man's nerve was too much for us—ta."

With this they dashed away at full speed for a thicket off to one side, just as a party of a dozen horsemen came in sight, riding at full speed along the trail.

CHAPTER LIX.

THE MIDNIGHT RACE.

Knowing that the nature of the ground for the next half mile would not allow of flight, Buffalo Bill determined to hold his ground, come what may.

So he still remained in the trail, with his disappointed prisoner, who, however, gained a ray of hope in the thought that the newcomers might be still another party of rescuers.

Why the first had taken to their heels, however, he could not understand.

As the second party came well into view in the valley the moonlight revealed a dozen of them, riding at full speed.

Beholding the first party dash away, a voice called out:

"There they go, pards!"

"But have they killed Cody and rescued the prisoner?"

"No, Cody is all right, and so is his prisoner," called back the scout, greatly relieved by the knowledge that the newcomers were not foes.

A moment more and up came the horsemen, with Doctor Eugene Douglass in their lead.

"Ho, Cody; delighted to find you all right, for we feared the worst."

His followers gave a ringing cheer at this, while Buffalo Bill replied:

"Oh, yes, we are all right, doctor,

thank you, and those good fellows with you, though it looked dark for me awhile ago."

"We got wind that a gang of rescuers had gone after you to take Nugget Ned, for Captain John told what had happened, so I called for volunteers to come and block their little game, and here we are, though we had to ride hard for it."

"And most grateful am I to you all, doctor."

"How did you save him from them? for they are a bad lot, I hear; in fact, know."

"I offered them their pard with toes turned up, and that bluffed them."

"Better let me take him off your hands, Mr. Cody, and save you further trouble, for that tree over yonder has the look of one that would make a good gallows."

This significant suggestion caused Nugget Ned to start visibly, but Buffalo Bill replied:

"No, pards, though he deserves hanging, I must give him up to General Burr and let his fate be there decided."

"Doctor, I thank you again, and your friends."

"Keep a close watch out for redskins, and I'll be back as soon as I can with a good force of soldiers to give the Indians a lesson and avenge the settlers of Silver Mound Settlement."

"Good-night, all."

The men gave a cheer, and some of them called after Nugget Ned in no complimentary manner as he rode on by the side of Buffalo Bill.

Once the scout had gotten over the rugged part of the trail, he said:

"Now, Nugget Ned, we will press on with speed, for I have had delay and trouble enough to-night."

"I don't feel very well—a kind of faintness; if you will only ride slow for a few miles I'll be all right, I guess," said the prisoner.

For a moment Buffalo Bill seemed inclined to yield to the request from a feeling of humanity, and said:

"There is a stream not far ahead, and—"

"Yes, yes, if I could rest there for a quarter of an hour I would be all right, I am certain."

Stopping suddenly, Buffalo Bill grasped the man's hand and laid his fingers upon his pulse.

Then he said sternly:

"Nugget Ned, you are a most infamous fraud, and I see through your game."

"What game?" faintly said the man, and he reeled as though about to fall from his saddle.

"Why, I know something of this country myself, and I saw the way your would-be rescuers went when they ran off."

"Five miles ahead is a splendid place for an ambush, and by hard riding they could beat me there, and the result would be your release and my death, and you suspect that such is their intention."

"Now ride for it, or I will lash you to your saddle and take no stock in your cries of pain, for I know you."

"Come, obey, or take the consequences."

A muttered curse showed that the man knew his game had failed, while Buffalo Bill started the two horses forward in a rapid run.

He knew that he had to ride hard to get to the place where the trails crossed before the rescuers.

Once Nugget Ned tugged at the reins to check the speed of his horse, but he did not try it again, as Buffalo Bill said sternly:

"Do that again, sir, and you shall feel the point of my bowie knife."

So on the horses flew, and having been ridden at a moderate pace up to that time, they were comparatively fresh, and ran well.

Mile after mile was gone over, until suddenly Buffalo Bill drew rein.

The trail crossing was only a quarter of a mile before him, and its approach

was along a rocky ridge, a good spot for the rescuers.

A moment of silence and Buffalo Bill cried:

"We are ahead of them, though they are riding hard."

"Our horses are the freshest, so you are safe, Nugget Ned, and so am I."

The prisoner groaned, and continuing on, they dashed past the place of intended ambush all of two hundred yards ahead of the intended rescuers.

As the ground was soft beyond, the hoof falls of the two horses were not heard, and the chase was given up.

Long before noon the next morning Buffalo Bill rode into Fort Platte with his prisoner, the two horses completely used up.

CHAPTER LX.

THE SCOUT'S REPORT.

When Buffalo Bill presented himself before General Burr the commandant of the military district of which he was chief of scouts, his pale, haggard face caused the general to exclaim:

"Why, Cody, are you ill?"

"Oh, no, sir, only tired."

"You look as though you had gone through a spell of severe illness."

"Sit down and let me order something to brace you up, for I know you have an interesting story to tell, as I saw you come in with your man in irons."

"Yes, sir, but he is not the Wandering Jew, but a dangerous character, as you shall hear."

"I left him in charge of the sentinel outside, sir, until I had reported to you; but just let me ask you to issue orders for all the troops you can spare for an immediate and forced march, for there is need of them."

"I have confidence enough in you, Cody, to order the men out before hearing your story," and the general called his orderly and sent for his adjutant.

That officer put in his appearance at once, being then on his way to headquarters, and the general asked:

"Now, Cody, how many, what arms, and where to go?"

"If you could mount five companies of infantry, sir, send with them three troops of cavalry, and a light battery, I think you will have need of all, with half of my company of scouts."

"Give the order, adjutant, for the troops Chief of Scouts Cody has named, and have them in the saddle within two hours, if it is that urgent, Cody."

"Yes, sir, it is."

"There will be old Black Eagle to fight, and he can muster over a thousand warriors, perhaps more, and he is out for scalps."

"He will strike Grizzly Gulch, sweep down upon Silver Mound Settlement, which a band under Red Spirit has just raided, and return by Sunrise Hills Settlement; or he will strike the latter first and come around by the gulch, perhaps threatening the fort, if he is successful in the settlements."

"This is startling news, indeed, and I will go myself in command, taking six hundred men, so as to make a complete blow of it; and yet leave three hundred soldiers at the fort."

The adjutant went off to personally see about the ordering out of the troops, and have them supplied with a week's rations, to be carried on pack mules, while ambulances, instead of wagons, would be taken along for the wounded, as they could be driven more rapidly.

While the general was listening to Buffalo Bill's story of his adventures since leaving the fort, he went on with preparations for going with the command, and having heard all, he said:

"Yes, I remember Sergeant Roger Rockwell, for he was one of my own regiment, a good soldier, yet a man who seemed always bearing a cross."

"He got his discharge and disappeared, and now, you tell me, fell by your shot when he attempted to rob you,

and died in the camp at Grizzly Gulch, and known as the Gentleman Vagabond."

"Yes, sir, so they called him."

"Yet he left you a legacy, you say?"

"Yes, sir, in a duty to perform; but fearing I might be held up, I left the belt with the money and papers with Doctor Eugene Douglass at the gulch."

"The belt I did not even look at the contents of, but the doctor had some sealing wax, and made me seal it up, though I told him to see to it if harm befell me, and it is still in his keeping."

"What you tell me about this man surprises me, and I believe, after all, he may have left some valuable secret."

"Perhaps so, sir, and others believe the same, for the Ghostly Judge and Jury I told you of wanted the belt, and the prisoner I have with me sought to murder me to get possession of it; so they must know something of it."

"You were to search for some one to give it to, he said?"

"Yes, sir, but I do not know who, not yet having had my directions."

"And you did not find the Wandering Jew so black as he was painted?"

"He cannot be, sir, if he does not rob the coaches he holds up."

"That is true."

"He is friendly with the Indians, yet he may not be a renegade, sir."

"Well, you must look him up another time."

"Now, what scout goes as chief in your place?"

"In my place, sir?"

"Yes, for you are not able to go after the week of unrest and work you have had."

"I'm only sleepy, sir, and will go."

"Then go at once to bed, and leave word to call you in three hours."

"Then you can overtake the command by night, and that much sleep means much to a man like you."

"It will make a new man of me."

"But the prisoner?"

"I'll see that he is taken care of until our return."

"He is cunning, sir, brave and desperate, while he has gold to buy his freedom with."

"I understand, and he shall have a treble guard over him."

CHAPTER LXI.

THE WARNING BY THE CAMPFIRE.

When Buffalo Bill was called by one of his men he found that the day was well spent.

"Why was I not called before, for I was that dead asleep I would not have awakened until the judgment day?" he asked angrily.

"By the general's orders, sir, for he told me I should go on double duty for a month if I called you, or allowed you to be disturbed until five o'clock."

"Five o'clock?"

"Then I have had five solid hours of being dead to the world."

"Yes, sir."

"Where is my horse?"

"One went with the command, sir, the other is ready for you now."

"When did the command pull out?"

"Just at one o'clock, sir."

"Then they have five hours' start."

"I must hustle for it."

Taking a bath and eating supper, Buffalo Bill mounted one of his best horses and dashed out from the fort just as the sun was an hour high.

He knew that the general would push the command twenty-five miles at least before a halt for supper and rest, and he must catch up before they moved on again.

The trail was good, his horse was one of great endurance and speed, and he gave himself two hours and a half to make the ride, for he knew where the soldiers would encamp.

After getting his horse warmed up to his work, he let him out at a sweeping gallop, and cast the miles rapidly behind him.

The sun set, but his speed was not slackened.

Darkness came—still the splendid horse was kept at his pace, the reins held well in hand by the scout, whose eyes were piercing the gloom ahead to pick out a way for the animal that he might not stumble or fall.

At last there gleamed far ahead a score of camp-fires, and as he dismounted before the general, he said:

"I am here to report for duty, sir."

"I have made the ride in just two hours and a half from the fort, and wish to thank you, sir, for the good rest you gave me."

"I'm glad you are here, Cody, for I have something to show you."

"Yes, sir."

"Read this."

The general handed the scout a slip of paper upon which was written in pencil in a bold hand, yet broken English:

"To the

Commandant of the Soldiers:

"The big chief Black Eagle has made a raid on Sunrise Hills Settlements, with fifteen hundred brave men."

"He has gone by the Willow Valley Trails, and come back by the Silver Mounds and the Grizzly Gulch."

"I have gone to the Forts to tell the Captains, but I have seen from Lookout Hills the soldiers coming, and so know that they know something, so I have written you this."

"The Wandering Jew."

"Well, Cody, what do you think of it?" asked the general, when the scout had read it.

"It is funny, sir."

"Very; but what importance do you place in it?"

"Much, sir."

"He asserts just what you told me that the Black Eagle would do, going just by Sunrise Hills Settlements."

"Yes, sir."

"But where did you get this?"

"The scouts ahead saw a fire start up just here, when half a mile away, and when they came up they found a small camp-fire, and near it, fastened in a stick, was this bit of paper, which they brought to me."

"That Wandering Jew knows what he is about, sir."

"Yes; but he says the Black Eagle has fully fifteen hundred braves."

"Yes, sir; I said a thousand or more, you remember."

"I recall that you did; but we have force enough to whip them if we can catch them."

"Yes, sir, and we must."

"What number of men can Sunrise Hills Settlement turn out?"

"About eighty fighters, sir, I learn."

"And Silver Mound Settlement?"

"Fifty, sir."

"And Grizzly Gulch?"

"Two hundred fighters, sir."

"Three hundred and thirty, all told."

"About that, sir."

"And where is the best place to strike the Indians?"

"Going the way the Wandering Jew says they are, they are flanking Sunrise Hills, and will come up unexpectedly in the rear of the settlement, and then push straight for Silver Mound, from which place they will move upon Grizzly Gulch."

"Now they cannot reach Sunrise Hills before to-morrow night, and we can pass Grizzly Gulch and meet them at Silver Mound."

"That is just it, and have the settlers of the two lower settlements fall back before them, and add to our strength, with the men of Grizzly Gulch."

"Yes, sir, and ambush them with half of your command and the settlers, while you send a troop of cavalry, three companies of infantry, and a couple of guns off toward Lone Mountain to strike them upon their retreat, after they have been whipped on the Grizzly Gulch trail."

"The very thing, Cody."

"I will at once send couriers to the settlements to make known that I am coming, and the plan, and—"

"I will go, sir."

"Then if you do, you go empowered by me to take command of the settlers," said the general quickly, and he added:

"But can you stand the long, hard ride?"

"Yes, sir; never fear for me, for I'll keep up."

Half an hour after, Buffalo Bill was mounted upon a fresh horse, and riding toward Grizzly Gulch at a swift pace, for he knew the great importance of warning the lower settlements of their danger in time for the women and children to retreat and the men to rally for action.

So much, then, depended upon the night ride of the gallant scout.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE FLIGHT AND PURSUIT.

When the moon rose late, it found Buffalo Bill pressing on along the trail, his horse at the same swift and steady pace.

He felt sorry to have to push the animal so hard, but human lives were at stake, perhaps by the score, and the dumb brute must perish in a good work if need be.

So hard did he ride that it was not yet dawn when the scout rode into Grizzly Gulch, and halted at the cabin of Doctor Eugene Douglass, who quickly learned what the settlers might expect, and was told to form the men as quickly as possible.

Gamblers and drinkers were still up in the saloon, but Captain John was aroused and told the news, and he said he would have the men on the march toward Silver Mound within an hour and a half at furthest, all well armed and mounted, and would halt to await the falling back of the settlers from below.

Buffalo Bill now mounted his matchless horse Paleface, which it will be remembered he had left at Grizzly Gulch, and having had a hearty meal, he was miles away from the camps when the sun rose.

The smoke of Silver Mound Settlement came into view by ten o'clock, and the first cabin Buffalo Bill came to was that of Fred Talbot.

The two parads greeted each other warmly, and Talbot heard what Buffalo Bill had to report, and said that the settlers were aroused, the cabins were being stripped of their furniture, and the women and children were ready to retreat on Grizzly Gulch, as he had reported a probable raid of the Indians.

He had also ridden on to Sunrise Hills Settlement and given a warning, and the men had rallied for a fight before he left, so would not be surprised by the redskins.

"With such a force against them they will stand no show."

"I will go on at once and have them retreat on this place."

"But what about Captain Reuben Benson, Talbot?"

"He escaped all right, but was wounded, and he believed us all dead."

"I will take charge here in his place, as he is hardly able to be up."

"I need a fresh horse and a good one."

"Take the sorrel, for he is fresh, and you know what he can stand."

"I'll get you an early dinner, too."

"No; give me a snack and I'll eat it as I go along, for not a minute is to be lost."

In ten minutes more Buffalo Bill was again in the saddle, mounted upon the fine sorrel, and the animal was put to his best pace.

It was half-past ten o'clock, and nearly fifty miles to Sunrise Hills, so Buffalo Bill knew that he must make it, and get the settlers on the retreat before sunset, as the Indians would attack about night-fall.

The sorrel was therefore another splendid animal to be ridden down, as had been the scout's horse that took him to Grizzly Gulch, falling with fatigue upon his arrival there.

"I am not sparing myself, good sorrel, so you must suffer also," said the scout, and mile after mile was left behind, and two hours before sunset the brave sorrel dropped dead as Buffalo Bill rode him up to the first cabin in Sunrise Hills Settlement.

To his great delight, the scout found the settlers ready to fight; but when he told them the force they would have to contend with, that there was a place to get the Indians into an ambush by the soldiers, the settlers left their homes to be destroyed, and, with such things as they could hide in the timber and rocks, not to be found in the darkness, and carry with them, all took up their march for Silver Mound Settlement.

While they were preparing to go Buffalo Bill had gotten his supper and had an hour's rest; but he was aroused by one of the rear guard, who reported the Indians not two miles away, as reported by a scout.

When night came on, the settlers, miles away on the march, saw the bright light in the skies, the reflection of their burning homes, and they were all glad indeed of the scout's warning.

Just before dawn the tired band reached the deserted Silver Mound Settlement, the Indians now close upon them, and even behind them the flames shot up from the little cabin homes that were also left to destruction by the redskins.

Two hours more and the women and children were hurried ahead, the men, joined by the Silver Mound settlers, formed in the rear, and the redskins, mad at not having surprised the two places, confident in numbers, and thirsting for scalps, charged down upon what to them appeared to be a band of a hundred men, at whose head they beheld their escaped prisoner, Paehaska.

With wild yells they came on to be met by a volley of a hundred rifles, and next to see rise up a still larger force of settlers, as the two bands from the lower settlements were joined by the men of Grizzly Gulch, and the fire of so large a force staggered them.

But only for a moment. Revenge was sweet, scalps galore seemed within their grasp, and on they came over a thousand strong, to suddenly hear the roar of artillery, to be met by volleys of infantry fire, and find themselves caught in a fight with a large force of gallant Boys in Blue, who had cleverly entrapped them.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE FALL OF BLACK EAGLE.

The settler that had suffered the most felt himself amply avenged when he gazed upon the dead-strewn field of battle, after the Indian army under Black Eagle had rushed upon General Burr and his brave soldier boys.

Driven back under the terrible fire, the redskins had at first seemed stunned by the unexpected repulse, and were only brought to a realization of their losses and perilous situation when they saw the soldiers forming rapidly for a charge under cover of their artillery.

Then they broke in wild confusion, and started on a rapid retreat by the nearest trail to their village.

They had left dozens of dead braves behind them and scores of wounded.

Their horses were tired out, they had no food, for they had depended upon getting all they wished in the settlements.

Anticipating, too, that they would capture a thousand or more horses, many more cattle to drive back, and be loaded down with plunder, while their belts hung heavy with the scalps of the pale-faces, they were so shocked, so utterly undone by the cruel blow that had dashed to earth all their plans, that they could only ride homeward, sullen, despairing, frightened, and fighting back the pursuing cavalry only when pressed too hard.

Thus the retreat went on through the day, the worn-out redskins longing for

night to come on, when they could scatter and elude their foes.

With the escape of Buffalo Bill and Talbot from their village, the Indian guard being still under the "sleeping spell," in which the scout had placed him, the Black Eagle and his braves were for pursuit, and a blow upon the settlements.

Against this the Red Buffalo had urged, for he said that he knew Paehaska, and he would give warning of such a raid which he would suspect them of making.

But the chiefs all thought differently, there would be no time for warning, they would strike the lower settlement, come on up and return rich in horses, cattle, scalps, and plunder.

All wounded as he was, the Red Buffalo had gone at the head of his band.

And the Red Buffalo it was who was now defending the rear upon the retreat, which the Black Eagle led.

He and his braves had seen Buffalo Bill commanding the settlers, and the young chief's words regarding Paehaska had come true.

They saw him, too, in the lead of the pursuing soldiers, and more than ever he became a man of terror to them.

But night was near, and then the pursuit must end.

Just ahead were the mountains, that would give them shelter.

But no! out of the timber, from among the rocks, and upon the mountain sides, shot flames of fire, and the deep roar of two guns, with their bursting shells, mingled with the rattle of rifles, carbines, and revolvers.

Black Eagle fell dead from his horse, other chiefs were killed, and the mass of Indians, hemmed in as they were, stood still, to be shot down, only a gallant few making a dash and cutting their way through to safety.

And that daring band was led by the young chief Red Buffalo, hardly able to sit on his pony from other wounds he had received.

Seeing that no resistance was offered, the man in command spread out his force, ceased firing, and with the pursuing soldiers coming up surrounded and made prisoners a thousand warriors.

They were strongly guarded, but fed well, and when the morning dawned were given supplies, their weapons and ponies taken from them, except those needed in carrying their wounded and dead, and the sorrowful, almost despairing braves were told to go to their village and bury the hatchet forever against the pale-faces, who would be their friends if they allowed them to be.

And to their village they went, and in the sorrowful council held that night, though his wounds kept him from being present, the Red Buffalo was made the head chief of the tribe, in spite of his youth, for he had shown himself the bravest of the brave, and the "man with a level head," as Buffalo Bill expressed it.

And Buffalo Bill came in for his share of glory, after he awoke the next morning after the battle, for he had slept through the night without a dream or a waking.

He found the general enthusiastic in his praise, the officers also, and the men cheering him on as he passed through the camps.

But when the soldiers took up their march to help build up the cabins in the settlements, for winter was coming on, Buffalo Bill set out on a lone trail, merely telling General Burr that he was going to find that mysterious character, the Wandering Jew.

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE ROUND-UP.

When Buffalo Bill left the army camp to go upon his search for the Wandering Jew he returned first to Grizzly Gulch, whither Paleface had been taken at his request by Doctor Douglass.

He wished to ride that matchless horse upon his trail, and also he decided to find

out just what the contents of the Vagabond Gentleman's belt were.

If of value he would be glad to know it, and if not he could dismiss the matter from his mind.

The papers might be worthless, his "legacy" be but the dream of a diseased mind.

With Doctor Douglass he would examine the belt and find out.

As he rode into Grizzly Gulch, which had escaped the torch of the red raiders, he was greeted with cheers upon every side, for the scout had become the idol of the miners.

Doctor Douglass he found alone in his cabin, resting after his untiring duties among the wounded, and he promptly accepted his invitation to spend the night in his cabin.

"I have come, doctor, to look over that belt with you, and then to start upon the trail of the Wandering Jew."

"I hope you may find him, Cody."

"I will if he's above ground, and still hangs out in the Wild West."

"But there is another trail I am anxious to find."

"What is that?"

"I told you of my experience in being captured by five outlaws?"

"Yes."

"And of these men leaving me to chase the Wandering Jew?"

"I remember."

"Then up came Judge Ghost and his Spectre Jury of Five."

"Yes."

"Now I wish to find out who they are, where they are, and just what their calling is."

"Good!"

"Fred Talbot is as keen as they make a man, and he has joined my company of scouts, so I have set him upon the trail of these men, to begin in the settlements, and I wish to have you help me, too."

"I'll do all I can, Cody."

"Just spot every man you think is doing lawless work, and make a list of them."

"Oh, Lord! I'll have to write down the town!"

"Not so bad as that."

"I understand what you want, and I'll do it, for I have already spotted several."

"I'll describe the five men who held me up, as well as I can, and you may happen upon them, and if you meet Talbot just compare notes."

"I will; but now we'll have supper, and then investigate that belt."

When supper was over the two friends sat at the table with a couple of lighted candles between them, and the doctor brought forth the belt of the dead Gentleman Vagabond.

Buffalo Bill broke the seals he had put upon it, and the contents were taken out.

First came the gold—forty dollars in amount.

Then there was the gold, gem-set miniature, with name pasted over the face.

The paper was removed, revealing the face of a beautiful young girl.

The name at the back was

"Beulah Von Leer."

"18—."

There was a lock of hair in a small leather case, a tress of red gold fully four feet in length!

Then there was a ruby ring of rare value, and a lady's watch and chain, set with diamonds, while attached was a gold locket, containing the miniature likeness of a very handsome man.

"Cody?"

"Well, doctor."

"Do you not notice anything peculiar about this face?"

"It is a very handsome man of twenty-eight or thirty, I should say."

"Nothing else?"

"Well, he has something of a Jewish cast of countenance, I should say."

"You are right; he is a Jew."

"And it's a Jew I'm on the trail of!"

But he must be a man of fifty-five, perhaps more."

"Well, now to these papers."

"Yes, the instructions first. What I have seen interests me more in the Gentleman Vagabond."

"As they do me."

There was one paper marked:

"Instructions."

Opening this, Buffalo Bill read:

"MY CONFESSION.

"The one who finds this must do as directed, for it is the will of a man in his grave. By so doing he will right a great wrong."

Then the scout went on to read aloud the "Confession," as follows:

"My name is Burdette Burr, and I was well born, and inherited a fortune.

"But I loved a beautiful girl, who did not return my love, and it drove me to dissipation, gambling, and at last resulted in a desire for revenge.

"The maiden I loved had married another, and he was a Jew, by name Marco Von Leer.

"He came West after his marriage to find gold to rescue his father from financial ruin, through having indorsed for friends.

"He hoped to find a mine in Colorado, which he had bought to help a poor friend in distress, a hidden claim.

"A fugitive from justice for forgery, I sought the home of the absent Marco Von Leer, and sent a bullet through the window, aiming at his wife's breast, as she sat with her husband's father at supper.

"I saw her fall, and fled. I then came West, and joined the army under an assumed name, that of Roger Rockwell.

"Then I served three years, and learning that Marco Von Leer was at the fort, still in search of his claim, which he had not thus been able to locate, I took his life when on the trail, and robbed him of all you will find in this belt.

"It may be that it turned my mind, for a year or two passed as a blank.

"Then I was aroused by seeing old Marco Von Leer here, on the frontier, and the shock made me ill.

"When I recovered I was seized with a desire to find the father of the man I had murdered, and give him all that I took from his son, and that means a fortune, for the papers I have reveal where the gold mine is that the young Von Leer was going to when I shot him from his horse, robbed him, cursed him, and left him to die on the side of the trail.

"Now, I beg of you, the one who finds these papers, should I die, to carry out my wish.

"It is a legacy I leave you, to find old Marco Von Leer and give all over to him, for he is now in the Wild West seeking for his son, and he will, I know, reward you tenfold.

"Neglect this bidding from a man in his grave and God's curse be upon you!

"The Gentleman Vagabond."

"Well, Cody, this is remarkable."

"It is doctor, that, and it tells us who is the Wandering Jew, and who he is on the search for—his son's murderer!"

"And this map and these directions show exactly where to find the gold mine."

"Yes."

"But now to find the Wandering Jew, Marco Von Leer."

CHAPTER LXV.

CONCLUSION.

The Wandering Jew was found, and by Buffalo Bill.

It was the third day of his search after leaving the doctor's cabin, that he saw a small camp-fire.

Approaching it on foot, and noiselessly, he called the name of the man he saw seated by it preparing his supper.

"Marco Von Leer, I am your friend. I have important news for you."

The Jew sprang to his feet, saw who had spoken to him, and the two men clasped hands.

Then the scout told his story of the Vagabond Gentleman's death and confession, and in turn learned that he was the one whom the Wandering Jew sought.

To his joy, also, Buffalo Bill learned that neither of the would-be assassins' shots had been successful, for the beautiful wife of young Marco Von Leer had recovered from her severe wound, and was then in the East.

The son also, left for dead by his foe, and robbed, was found by miners, taken to their cabin, and made his way in time back to his home, where his wife and father had heard his sad story.

Marco Von Leer senior had been a physician of eminence, and, a devoted student of geology and botany, he had roamed for years over plains and mountains, and there became an expert woodsman, hunter, and scout.

Thus had he won favor with the redskins, and they had been his devoted friends.

True to his white foes, though avoiding all of his race in his wandering search of the man whom his son had told him had been guilty of crimes so infamous, he had sought only to save his people from the savages, as the reader has seen.

Through the night the two men, Buffalo Bill and the Wandering Jew, talked, and the latter learned of the scout's having the papers that told where the mine was to be found.

Together, the following day, they went there and found the claim, staked out years before, fairly rich in gold, and had Buffalo Bill been willing to accept it, he would have become the partner of the Wandering Jew in a gold mine.

But he was not to be paid for doing his duty, his conscience rewarding him, as it had in numberless other instances where he had rounded up the lawless men of the Wild West.

In due course of time, leaving his mine to be looked after by Doctor Douglass, Marco Von Leer took Nerry Nat's coach eastward to tell his loved children the glad news he had for them, and on his way he stopped at Fort Platte in time to witness a military execution.

It was of Nugget Ned, who was paying the penalty of his crimes, with half a dozen other outlaws whom Buffalo Bill and Fred Talbot had run down, and whom the scout recognized as his captors, and later those whom he had called Judge Ghost and his Spectre Jury.

THE END.

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